













# I N D I A:

## A Plea for Understanding

By

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## INDIA : A PLEA FOR UNDERSTANDING

From the murmur and subtlety of suspicion  
With which we vex one another  
Give us rest.

Make a new beginning  
And mingle again the kindred of the nations in  
The alchemy of love.

And with some finer essence of forbearance  
Temper our minds.—ARISTOPHANES.

1943, and a world at war. Against this grim background the twentieth century drama of the estrangement of Britain and India moves inexorably on towards the close of the final act. 1922, 1931, 1943 have followed in tragic sequence. Though for most of us today war fills the horizon, posterity will clearly trace those moral upheavals of which war was but the outward manifestation. Turning the searchlight of Truth on India, they will say, maybe, that it was here that the struggle of good and evil within and between nations was finally resolved. They will write of those Great Incompatibles, who after much travail were reborn—two purified nations—

to lay in honourable partnership the unshakable foundations of a New Order. Or it may not be so.

Few people have watched the tragedy from its inception. Others have been detained by private or public affairs, and have but recently become aware of something tremendous happening. Inevitably they must now depend on the garbled synopses of the Interpreters. But for the early-comers who have sat through long hours of strain and tension it is not so. They have heard all the speeches for themselves, they have wondered at the missed cues, the lost opportunities, the ill-timed events, the harsh judgments—all that sorry display of lack of sympathy and intuitive understanding which had brought Acts One and Two to their unhappy end. 1931 had followed on 1922, with the same old arguments, the same old accusations, the same old fears. Must it now happen all over again? Need it? Will no statesman arise with vision and courage to break the fetters of unimaginative thinking and point a better way?

Not that the few dare claim to have the key to all mysteries. Nor are they insensitive to the difficulties. Often enough the mental approach of the East has been baffling to them, the language perplexing, the attitude irritating. But they have

caught the look on the faces of the chief actors, and have been stirred by strong voices vibrant with a passionate sincerity. A sense of frustrated greatness in the spiritual struggles they have witnessed has sent them behind scenes to hear from the lips of the actors themselves the true interpretation of difficult passages. In the subtlety of that harmony which only personal contact can give they have found rest from the "subtlety of suspicion with which we vex one another."

But for the majority, the voice of the Interpreter still drones on, crushing with sterile logic the very soul of things. How cold, how calculating those fine speeches are made to seem in this unsympathetic phraseology! Torn from their setting, twisted, distorted, they invite mockery—even anger. "The pity of it!" Has the world no eyes to see with, no ears to hear with, no spirit with which to comprehend the meaning of this tale ~~that~~ is told? ....

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Sevagram. Central Provinces, India. Seated crosslegged on the floor of the mud hut he calls home is a half-clothed Indian. He is spinning. "The chief villain," whispers an Interpreter. "Or hero, maybe," vouchsafes an unorthodox voice.

There is a spreading hiss. Little doubt among the audience which he is. Booing begins. "Quiet there. Let the man speak." But Gandhi does not speak—not yet. He looks sad, worried, almost dejected. A friend sits beside him. "Mahadev, will you sing again that song of Gurudev ?" And Mahadev Desai sings :

When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.

When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song.

When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest.\*

More than twenty years since Gandhi had felt the quickening pulse of India, and sensed danger ahead as he faced the reality of suppressed millions struggling to be free. Revolution ? It was inevitable. But must India follow the usual path of violence and bloodshed ? Was there no better way ? Not unless he could fashion his people according to his own great ideal—cause them by the untried power of soul-force and suffering to oppose

\**Gurudev* : Rabindranath Tagore.

and bring to nought what he deemed the unworthy might of Empire. A colossal task for such a little man. Absurd, of course. Funny, too. And he chuckled at the thought of the gossamer threads of his non-violence spread in the path of advancing steam-rollers. Yet so long as there were still men in the machine of Empire, so long could his method have a chance to prevail. Meanwhile, how should he wean the indignant youth of Bengal from terrorist ways? How should he cure the wounds of the Punjab? For by blunderbuss methods culminating in the massacre of Amritsar, by the atrocities that followed, and by the insufferable indignities heaped upon her, India had been hurt deep within her very soul. But that he must make the experiment he had no doubt—for love of India and of Britain, too. If not, the seething discontent would spread over the land, and conflagration be inevitable. Revolution there must be, but let it be, then, of a new order—open, and non-violent—the power of the spirit pitted against brute force.

In 1922, he had tried and failed, by the standards of men. But what was it the British judge had said, when committing him to six years' imprisonment?

Mr. Gandhi, you have made my task easy in one way, by pleading guilty to the charge.

Nevertheless, what remains, namely, the determination of a just sentence, is perhaps as difficult a proposition as a judge in this country could have to face. The law is no respecter of persons. Nevertheless, it will be impossible to ignore the fact that you are in a different category from any person I have ever tried, or am likely to have to try. It would be impossible to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your countrymen you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals, and of noble and even saintly life. I have to deal with you in one category only. It is not my duty, and I do not presume to judge or criticize you, in any other character. It is my duty to judge you as a man subject to the law....I should like to say (in passing sentence) that if the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I.

The Great Trial had brought Act One to a close.

Ten more difficult years, in prison and out. Years of arduous constructive work, involving self-discipline and self-sacrifice for himself and for

all whom he inspired to follow him—breaking down Unfouchability ; living with the humblest of villagers to teach them by example elementary laws of sanitation and hygiene ; reviving India's ancient crafts to provide creative work and a supplementary means of livelihood for men and women sunk in mental degradation through long years of debt, want and social ostracism ; struggling for Hindu-Moslem unity, working for the rights of depressed humanity. By men and women of all classes and creeds he was much loved for his humility, selflessness and sincerity. Where he moved, the crowds moved with him. Many tried to understand his teaching and train themselves in his non-violent ways. But often enough they failed him—being human.

1931 had found him at the Round Table Conference. Nearly all the rest of the delegates, hand-picked by the Paramount Power, were men little known by the people of India. They spoke with discordant voices for the sectional interests they represented. Gandhi, as representative of the National Congress Party, stood for that underlying unity which binds all classes and sections of India together, recognizing no barriers of caste, race or creed. He called himself the spokesman of the people. For always in the forefront of his thinking is his moral responsibility for the welfare,

both material and spiritual, of the half-starved masses. The prayer of Rabindranath Tagore is his also :

Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys  
and sorrows.

Give me the strength to make my love fruitful  
in service.

Give me the strength never to disown the  
poor or bend my knees before insolent  
might.

The struggle at home had been getting harder, with millions straining at the leash to be free. . He pleaded that his country might have control over her own purse and defence, knowing well that the upkeep of the existing imperial administration and army was helping to crush the toiling masses into abject poverty. In speeches which most Englishmen have neither heard nor read, he humbly petitioned the ministers of the Crown to grant self-determination, long promised, to India, that she might set her own house in order. Then she would become no longer the subject but the willing partner of Great Britain, held, not by force, but "by the silken cords of love." But he pleaded in vain. The great Whale of the growing estrangement between the two countries was



ignored, while men fastened attention on the Red Hefrings of Hindu-Moslem disunity, the Princes, the States, the Untouchables. Disappointed, Gandhi returned to India, saying, "True, I have come empty-handed, but I am thankful I have not compromised the honour of the country." In England he had hinted at the possibility of impending "open, non-violent rebellion." "We do not, however, want the freedom of India to be bought at the sacrifice of the lives of others, to be achieved by spilling the blood of the rulers", he had insisted. "But if any sacrifice can be made by the nation, by ourselves, to win that freedom, then we will make it." Act Two had ended with the scenes of that sacrifice, with all its human failings that had caused it once more to be crushed beneath the heel of Empire. And once more Gandhi had failed—by the standards of men.

More than ten years ago. And now? Still that elemental urge of masses struggling to be free—this time in the midst of world upheaval of unprecedented magnitude. Sullen, discontented, frustrated India, growing as tired of the little old man's non-violent ways as of the rulers' unfulfilled promises. Through the eyes of Jawaharlal Nehru, her able roving ambassador, she had seen the present Great War coming. She had carefully watched the

fate of China, of Abyssinia, of Spain, of Europe. Deploring an appeasement that seemed anxious only to preserve the *status quo*, she had herself openly condemned Fascism of every sort and had sent what help she could to the countries in distress.

Meanwhile, year after year, at the annual sessions of the All-India National Congress, she had repeated in increasingly definite terms her desire for Independence, pledging herself openly to the struggle to achieve it, so that she might be free both to control her own destiny and to play a worthy part in international affairs. But the statesmanlike speeches of her leaders went unheeded, save by the very few—and by a bureaucracy that either ignored them or registered them as offensive and even seditious.

Sad, disappointing years, but for a happy interlude when, though she had not been granted that control over purse and defence for which Gandhi had pleaded, India was allowed provincial autonomy. Finding itself in power in eight out of the eleven provinces, Congress had shown resourcefulness and imagination in grappling with internal problems. Though financially cramped they had embarked on the Wardha scheme of Education—one of Gandhi's greatest constructive contributions to his country—the beginnings of an

attempt to bring to the illiterate masses (90 per cent of the population of the country) not only a knowledge of how to read and write, but an educational training for world citizenship through the medium of a basic craft. By a method eminently suited to the genius and needs of the nation, the vast population was to be transformed from a liability to an asset—not only to India but to the world.

The opportunity to create had relieved to some extent the sense of frustration, and the relationship between British and Indians improved. Would nothing be done to use this opportune moment for a final settlement between the two countries, and the cementing of British-Indian friendship in an honourable partnership? The few deeply concerned folk slipped once more behind the scenes, to talk this time with their own countrymen. Could they not feel the atmosphere of expectancy and hope? Was not this the psychological moment for a new beginning, for a generous act of wise statesmanship that would stamp out all bitter memories from the minds of an over-sensitive people? In the coming clash between nations India and Britain would have need of each other. Any further estrangement would be fatal to the interests of both. What about those speeches in which leading Indians had said that if only Britain would

admit that she had, in common with others, made mistakes in the past, if only she would drop her autocratic ways, affectionate India would rush more than three-quarters of the way to meet her? What about the references to prestige—the cheap and shoddy prestige of outward show and power, compared with the real prestige which, in Eastern eyes, is the reward only of those who love and serve?

But the chance had been missed. Instead, there had been the dismal mistake of 1939 when subject India, which had begun to feel the glow of coming freedom, was reminded of her bondage by the Imperial decree cabled from Whitehall declaring that she was now at war with Germany. War, with all that it must mean to her suffering millions and her leaders not even consulted! So the world had witnessed the sorry spectacle of a great nation rebelling at being dragged into a struggle that she would gladly have entered upon of her own free will, while the fact that Britain had a right to act thus merely reminded India of her subjection.

Deeply wounded, the National Congress, largest and most representative political body of India, had sent a restrained and carefully worded document asking for a statement of Britain's war aims, so that India might know for what, as well as against what, she was asked to fight. Was

India to be free? But no statesmanlike response was evoked in this delicate situation. In an atmosphere of recrudescant mistrust and suspicion, strained relationship developed into deadlock, friendly overtures crystallized into adamant demands.

Nor was it easy for the most sympathetic British observers to follow the complicated pattern of Congress policy, directed now by Gandhi, now by Nehru, according to whether the attainment of Indian freedom by non-violent methods or the question of India's conditional collaboration in the war effort came to the force. The two men followed different paths, though remaining loyal to each other. When Nehru was leading, Gandhi stepped down from his position of authority and went back to his village to continue his constructive work. When sent for again to take the helm he reassumed responsibility, however dark the outlook. Then Nehru obediently accepted his decisions, even when his own intellect warred against them. An attitude that only those Westerners can understand who have carefully studied the nature of Gandhi's influence. To the sons and daughters of India he is the beloved "guru" or teacher, living so closely in touch with the unseen that he instinctively feels his way through situations. He can be trusted implicitly. Often

enough experience has proved that it was not he, but the intellectually wise who were following a wrong path. Between Gandhi and Nehru is an unbreakable bond of friendship which can stand the strain of divergent thinking, and is immeasurably strengthened by the younger man's deep respect for a spiritual master.

Time dragged on, with the situation in India steadily worsening. The war was not going well for the Allies. Singapore lost, Malaya, Burma, and the Japanese advance threatening India herself. After the fall of Rangoon came Britain's supreme effort—the Cripps Mission. But Sir Stafford had come, and gone. The tremendous crescendo of hope and expectation that heralded his arrival had ended in disillusionment more bitter than ever before. "Britain's fault," said India. "India's fault" said Britain. "Gandhi's fault," soon shouted the world at large. For was it not he who had first turned down those proposals? Why had he? But what was that to do with it? That he had was sufficient. "Supposing there was something really wrong with the proposals, though?" suggested the unorthodox voices. "Something may be that British people did not understand?" "Impossible; they were magnanimous to a degree!" came the testy answer. "Why

can't India stop being difficult, right in the middle of a war? What's the good of Britain making generous gestures when the other side hasn't the grace to accept what is offered? She'll get full freedom after the war. We've promised, and the British people mean business. That should be enough."

But a few troubled thinkers, deeply concerned for the welfare of both Britain and India, and nothing that not only Gandhi and Congress, but all other parties in India had condemned the proposals, slipped behind scenes and sought an explanation. Abstruse and difficult clarifications, but one thing was certain, in India's eyes there was something definitely wrong. Gandhi himself had seen it from the beginning, had pointed it out to Sir Stafford, and then gone away, leaving the others to make up their own minds. Never once had he interfered with their deliberations, though it was true that the fact that he was known to have disapproved made them walk warily, of course. As Sir Stafford explained later to America, it was a question of the indirect interference of his great influence over men. Nevertheless, Nehru, Azad (Moslem President of Congress) and others who were anxious to bring India fully into the world struggle for freedom had tried hard to accept.

But it was no good. Too clearly they saw, or thought they saw, that it would be fatal for both Britain and India to try to cross the chasm in two leaps. The situation was too critical, the distrust of Britain—whether justifiable or not—too great to be ignored. Only the granting of real power *now*, not in the misty future after the war, could satisfy India. There must be a National Government responsible to the people of India. An Indianized Council, chosen by the Viceroy, foreign representative of an alien Power, could be no substitute for an Indian Cabinet, especially when it was made clear that the Viceroy would still retain his power of vetoing his Council's decisions. Moreover, it was essential to have an Indian Defence Minister, they said. Jawaharlal Nehru, *au fait* from personal experience with conditions in China and Russia, and the nature of the struggle in those countries, was convinced that India's resistance to Japan must be a people's war such as no foreign leadership could inspire. Nor were the proposals for the permanent settlement of Indian affairs after the war satisfactory. Since the edict had gone forth from Whitehall that the proposals must be accepted or rejected *in toto*, Indian leaders felt that they had no option but to reject.



It was easier to blame Gandhi than to try to understand. Passions are quickly roused in time of war, and clear thinking is difficult. A few subtle hints at "traitor," "saboteur," "rebel"—and the world is ablaze. And the "villain," if villain he was? Saddened, but unperturbed by all the misconception and misinterpretation, he plodded on. "I lay both praise and blame at the feet of the Almighty and go my way." Exasperating little old man.

Since then he has done a truly terrible thing—in the judgment of men. Away in the quiet of Sevagram, removed from the bustle and turmoil of war, he had been thinking deeply, trying to get things in perspective. Only the very few knew that he was wrestling in silence with hard, unpalatable facts, and with conflicting emotions. Truth, he believed, was being revealed to him; and he did not want to face it. He knew that if he gave utterance to it he would forfeit the friendship and trust of many people both in India and abroad; they would doubt his wisdom, question his honesty. Wisdom he could afford to lose, but honesty was a precious treasure to him. Yet a force within him—conscience, basic nature, whatever "it" was, compelled him to speak. Now he would have to face the world alone. But the

inner voice spoke clearly to him, saying, "You are safe so long as you stare the world in the face, though the world may have bloodshot eyes. Do not fear that world, but go ahead, with the fear of God in you." Naive, perhaps, to tell the twentieth century of an inner voice urging him on. But history in the past has not lacked its men and women who, impelled by an unseen force which they themselves could not understand, have been driven to cry, "So help me God. I can do no other."

Summoning all his courage, Gandhi made his startling announcement that the time had come for the British to leave India. A drastic remedy to meet a drastic situation. But just as a faithful surgeon must risk everything, even the life of his patient, and sometimes against the advice of fellow surgeons, once the right step has been made clear to him, so Gandhi made his grave decision. Of course he himself might still be wrong, but unless he could be convinced of error, he must go on. The slogan went out, "Quit India"—but not in enmity. "It has cost me much", he said, "to come to the conclusion that the British should withdraw from India.... It is like asking loved ones to part, but it has become a paramount duty .... They and we are both in the midst of fire. If

they go, there is a likelihood of us both being safe. If they do not, Heaven only knows what will happen."

The world has not understood. Why should it? Who in 1942 had time or patience to disentangle the enigmatic statements of a tiresome old visionary? An avalanche of hatred and cruel misrepresentation soon descended on him. But was it fair? Was it wise? Did the world know the situation as he did? Could the officials at Whitehall understand his people as he did? Could even the rulers at Delhi? Cut off from the masses of India by all the pomp of Empire, dependent on reports of minor officials and C.I.D. men against whom the hearts of the people are closed, could they gauge as accurately as the little old man of India the fast-gathering resentments fanned under Axis propaganda, hunger and penury? How could the British people, thousands of miles away and overburdened by war, be expected to visualize the ugly sores of which official reports did not speak? Were they haunted, as Gandhi and Nehru and others have always been, by the spectacle of skeleton-like peasants in the thousands of neglected villages? How should they know of suffering humanity huddled together like animals in the overcrowded tenements of Bombay?

Who should blame them if they had failed to grasp the fact that in spite of her much-lauded contributions to India in history books, Britain was not loved but deeply mistrusted in India ? How should they see the danger, so clear to Indian leaders, of a foreign power seeking to defend its possessions in an occupied country with the people of that country too disgruntled or apathetic to give their full support ?

Gandhi might, of course, be wrong. Always there is a tendency for the victims of a situation to exaggerate the evils, and lose sight of the good. Perhaps he had gone too far with his drastic remedy. But maybe he had not meant exactly what men thought he meant. That was an irritating habit of his, blurting things out in a crude form, just as the idea took shape in his mind, and then moulding and softening it afterwards. Presently he would have more to say, that was certain. Better to suspend judgment for a while, and await the explanation. But how should an impatient world grown accustomed to shallow wartime thinking do that ? Condemnation came swiftly. "Arch-saboteur." "Quisling." "Pro-Japanese." Even the sane voice of Field-Marshal Smuts was drowned, and only the very few listened to his warning words :

With regard to Mr. Gandhi, it is sheer nonsense to talk of him as a Fifth Columnist. He is a great man. He is one of the great men of the world and he is the last person to be placed in that category. He is dominated by high spiritual ideals. Whether those ideals are always practicable in our difficult world is another question. I have just told you of one great ideal which I have had which has not proved practical politics in this world. Mr. Gandhi may be making a similar mistake in regard to India, but that he is a great patriot, a great man, a great spiritual leader, who can doubt ?\*

But how should Smuts know ? Because for eight years he had fought Gandhi in South Africa, only to become his friend. In 1939, he had written of him :

It was my fate to be the antagonist of a man for whom even then I had the highest respect. That clash on the small stage of South Africa brought out certain qualities

\*Extract from verbatim report taken by Treasury Reporter at the Press Conference held on Friday, November 13, 1942, The Rt. Hon. Brendan Bracken, M. P., Minister of Information, in the chair, and the speaker Field-Marshal Smuts, Prime Minister of South Africa.

of Gandhi's character which have since become more prominently displayed in his large-scale operations in India. And they show that he was prepared to go all out for the causes which he championed, he never forgot the human background of the situation, never lost his temper or succumbed to hate, and preserved his gentle humour even in the most trying situation. His manner and spirit even then, as well as later, contrasted markedly with the ruthless and brutal forcefulness of our day.

Many people, even some who sincerely admire him, will differ from some of his ideas and some of his ways of doing things. His style of doing things is individual, is his own, and, as in the case of other great men, does not conform to the usual standards. But however often we may differ from him, we are conscious all the time of his sincerity, his unselfishness, and above all of his fundamental and universal humanity. He always acts as a great human with deep sympathy for men of all classes and races and especially for the underdog. His outlook has nothing sectional about it, but is distinguished by that universal and eternal human which is the hall mark of true

greatness of spirit....Gandhi is moving immense masses of men along noble lines to a destiny which in essence is one with the high Christian ideal which the West has received but no longer seriously practises.\*

When a man of such high moral calibre throws out a great challenge in the middle of a war, may be he is not after all casting a spanner into delicate machinery, but releasing a hidden source of power as yet untapped.

All through the present Act, there has been a player missing—Charles Freer Andrews, that well-loved Englishman, known throughout India as Christ's Faithful Apostle, after his initials, C. F. A. Always he had been there explaining, appealing, advising, sometimes gently mocking or chiding, a trusted link between his own country, and those he had come to love and serve. At the time of his death, in 1941, Gandhi had said:

At the present moment I do not wish to think of English misdeeds. They will be forgotten, but not one of the heroic deeds of Andrews will be forgotten so long as India

\*Extract from *Mahatma Gandhi : ESSAYS AND REFLECTIONS*, edited by Radhakrishnan. Published by George Allen & Unwin, 1939.

and England live....It is possible, quite possible, for the best Englishmen and the best Indians' to meet together and never to separate till they have evolved a formula acceptable to both. The legacy left by Andrews is worth the effort.

Now when tension was<sup>1</sup> at its height after the failure of the Cripps Mission, an Englishman had cabled Gandhi, reminding him of Andrews' legacy. In reply, Gandhi had sent a long letter in which he revealed his agony of mind, and his conviction that it would be better for the British to withdraw from India. This was the first time that he had given expression to the idea.

Sir Stafford has come and gone (he had written). I talked to him frankly, but as a friend, if for nothing else for Andrews' sake. I told him that I was speaking to him with Andrews' spirit as my witness. I made suggestions, but all to no avail. As usual, they were not practical. I had not wanted to go.....I went because he was anxious to see me. ....I was not present throughout the negotiations with the Working Committee. I came away. You know the result. It was



inevitable. The whole thing has left a bad taste in the mouth.

My firm opinion is that the British should leave India now in an orderly manner and not run the risk they did in Singapore, Malaya and Burma. That would mean courage of a high order, confession of human limitations, and right doing by India.

But before the letter reached England the addressee had already set out himself for India, and had arrived at Sevagram soon after the request for withdrawal had been made public.

"We were wondering," he said, smiling, as he greeted the Indian veteran, "whether it was auspicious for an English party to arrive in India when you were asking the British to withdraw !

Gandhi's eyes twinkled as he welcomed his friend. "My first writing," he confessed, "did give rise to that kind of fear. That was because I had not given expression to the whole idea in my mind. It is not my nature to work out and produce a finished thing all at once. The moment a question was asked me, I made it clear that no physical withdrawal of every Englishman was meant. I meant the withdrawal of the British domination. And so every Englishman in India

can convert himself into a friend.....The condition is that every Englishman has to dismount from the high horse he is riding and cease to be monarch of all he surveys, and identify himself with the humblest of us. The moment he does it, he will be recognized as a member of the family. His role as a member of the ruling caste must end for ever. And so, when I said 'withdraw' I meant 'withdraw as masters'. The demand for withdrawal has another implication. You have to withdraw irrespective of the wishes of anybody here. You must withdraw because it is your duty to do so, and not wait for the unanimous consent of all the sections or groups in India.

"There is thus no question of the moment being inauspicious for you. On the contrary, if you can assimilate my proposal, it is the most auspicious moment for you to arrive in India. You will meet many Englishmen here. They may have entirely misunderstood what I have said, and you have to explain to them exactly what I want them to do.

"You have this peculiar mission of interpretation and reconciliation. And it is well, perhaps, that your mission begins with me. Begin it with finding out what exactly is at the back of my mind

by putting to me all the questions that may be agitating you." Referring to the letter, he continued, "You will see that I have used the words 'orderly withdrawal'. I had, when I used the phrase, Burma and Singapore in mind. It was a disorderly withdrawal from there. For they left Burma and Malaya neither to God nor to anarchy, but to the Japanese. Here I say, 'Don't repeat that story here. Don't leave India to Japan, but leave India to Indians in an orderly manner.' So you have now to DO WHAT ANDREWS DID—UNDERSTAND ME, PITILESSLY CROSS-EXAMINE ME, AND THEN, IF YOU ARE CONVINCED, BE MY MESSENGER."

So are we all invited to become seekers after truth, to cross-examine, and try to understand, as we listen to what Gandhi really said instead of to what others say he said. We may still remain unconvinced, but listen we should. And why? Because our country has still an important role to play in the shaping of things to come, and can do little of real worth until the Indian puzzle is solved. Also because we are at the crisis of world war, and, as a Chinese has pointed out, the deadlock in India is more serious than a major military defeat.

This man, Gandhi, is of a rather rare order. He has too much sense of humour to count him-

self a saint, a Mahatma, a Great Soul, though millions call him so. He is a human being who makes mistakes—in common with us all. Moreover, when convinced of wrong doing, he has courage to confess those mistakes. A less common trait. But conviction must always precede confession. He is too honest ever to pretend that he was wrong when he doesn't believe it, to recant when he believes himself right. He sometimes changes his course, but moves always in the same direction. Superficially inconsistent, but fundamentally consistent—often irritatingly so. Obstinate some would say.

Certain avenues of his Eastern thinking may be closed to our Western minds, but it would be foolish indeed to jib at details and miss the essential message. So, while we reserve to ourselves the right of honest criticism, let us grant him the right of explanation. Britain is famed for that. Let us remind ourselves, too, that we are dealing with a Man of God who, while he walks this earth as a realist of realists, looks out on the world from a different angle of vision. "And with some finer essence of forbearance temper our minds"—so that we do not mock at things we do not understand. And why? Because otherwise posterity may mock at us, pointing a finger of

scorn at the fusty sobersides who paced up and down their cage of restricted understanding—heads aching, brows furrowed, deep in interminable fruitless arguments, when they might have stepped out into regions “where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free.” Because otherwise some puckish sprite of days to come may laugh and shout, “Lord, what fools those British were! Thinking to play Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark; India without Gandhi!”

Sevagram. Central Provinces, India. Scene of many discussions and deliberations. Half-buried in labels with which an ignorant world has plastered him. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi holds the fort alone, tirelessly meeting the thrusts of his attackers; speaking his mind fearlessly, sometimes impatiently, but never in anger.

“But why *should* Britain withdraw?” thunders a critic.

Let us listen-in to some of the old man’s answers. Sheer foolishness they may seem to us; but our minds are limited too.

I remain the same friend today of the British  
....I have no trace of hatred in me towards  
them. But I have never been blind to their

limitations, as I have not been to their great virtues.....I do not deny the existence of hatred among the people at large, nor its increase with the march of events.....I see with the naked eye that the estrangement is growing.....there is no such thing as a common joint interest.....The introduction of foreign soldiers, the admitted inequalities of treatment of Indian and European evacuees, and the manifestly overbearing nature of the troops are adding to the distrust of British intentions and declarations. I feel that they cannot all of a sudden change their traditional nature. Racial superiority is treated not as a vice but as a virtue....this is a drastic disease requiring a drastic remedy. I have pointed the remedy—complete and immediate withdrawal.....It will be the bravest and cleanest act of the British people. It will at once put the Allied Cause on a completely moral basis, and may even lead to a most honourable peace between the warring nations. And the clean end of Imperialism is likely to be the end of Fascism and Nazism which are an offshoot of Imperialism... The first condition of British success is the present undoing of the wrong. It should precede, not follow, victory. The

presence of the British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal removes the bait. Assume, however, that it does not, Free India will be better able to cope with the invasion—*Harijan*, May 10, 1942.

A week later, these ideas are further developed:

If my appeal goes home, I am sure the cost of British interests in India.....would be nothing compared to the ever-growing cost of war to Britain. And when one puts morals in the scales, there is nothing but gain to Britain, India and the world. BRITAIN MAY BE SAID TO BE AT PERPETUAL WAR WITH INDIA which she holds by right of conquest and through an army of occupation.....

The poor, he declares, are turned out of their homes for troops, British or Indian, before the Japanese menace arrives. Their "paltry vacating expense carries them nowhere." They do not evacuate out of a spirit of patriotism. The people of Bengal, for instance, have been made to surrender their canoes in case the Japanese should come and make use of them. The Bengali may be said to be amphibious, and "for him to part with his canoe is like parting with his life." So, "those

who take away his canoe he regards as his enemy.”

Moreover :

The falsity that envelops Indian life is suffocating. Almost every Indian you meet is discontented. But he will not own it publicly. The government employees, high and low, are no exception. I am not giving hearsay evidence. Many British officials know this. But they have evolved the art of taking work from such elements. This all-pervading distrust and falsity make life worthless, unless one resists it with one's whole soul.

But here he seems to suspect the raised eyebrows and questioning glances, and knows that he probably will not be believed. So he runs to meet the criticism,

You may refuse to believe all I say. OF COURSE I SHALL BE CONTRADICTED. I SHALL SURVIVE THE CONTRADICTIONS. I HAVE STATED WHAT I BELIEVE TO BE THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH, AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH. Many people may or may not approve of this loud thinking. I have consulted nobody. . . . When slavery was abolished in America, many slaves protested, some even wept. But protests and tears not-



withstanding, slavery was abolished in law. But the abolition was the result of a bloody war between the South and the North, and so, though the negro's lot is considerably better than before, he still remains the outcast of high society. I ASK FOR A BLOODLESS END OF AN UNNATURAL DOMINATION, AND FOR A NEW ERA, even though there may be protests and wailings from some of us.

A Lincoln might have understood this language.

Thus for Gandhi, the withdrawal of British power in India is essentially a moral act, urgently needed to place the Allied Cause on a sound basis. Running all through the issues of *Harijan* at this time, and for months to follow, is the same refrain :

One thing, and only one thing, for me is solid and certain. THIS UNNATURAL PROSTRATION OF A GREAT NATION MUST CEASE, if the victory of the Allies is to be ensured. They lack the moral basis.....America and Britain are very great nations, but their greatness will count as dust before the bar of dumb humanity, whether African or Asiatic..... They will have no right to talk of liberty and all else, unless they have washed their hands

clean of pollution. That necessary wash will be their surest insurance of success, for they will have the good wishes—unexpressed, but no less certain—of millions of dumb Asiatics and Africans. Then, but not till then, will they be fighting for a New Order. THIS IS THE REALITY. (*Harijan*, June 14, 1943.)

Again :

If British rule ends, that moral act will save America and Britain. If they choose to remain here, they should remain as friends, not as proprietors of India. The American and British soldiers may remain...by virtue of a compact with free India.

Gandhi is not the only man to be troubled by this weak spot in the Allied Cause. Lin Yutang, the distinguished Chinese author, deplors the fact that "both the United States and Great Britain have not changed in their attitude to Asia," and is concerned about the outcome of the peace. Dr. Spinks of America has stated that "racial equality today is pre-requisite to our conception of a New World Order." While Wendell Wilkie has reminded us that "the reservoir of human goodwill is leaking" on the question of the colour bar

and racial discrimination. Unbiased visitors to India are all too often distressed by the arrogance, sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious, of the white, ruling race, and blush to see Indians—often more educated and cultured than their overlords—being treated as inferiors.

“Maybe,” counter the critics. “But this is no time to settle the colour question, with Japan on the doorstep. We must be practical. Gandhi must be secretly pro-Japanese to talk as he does.”

Pro-Japanese !! By the very struggle in which we are engaged we proclaim our belief in freedom, including liberty of thought and expression, both for ourselves and other people. But that freedom should not include the right to defame the character of those with whom we find ourselves in disagreement. One of the cruelest libels of today, and one fast gaining ground, is the assertion that Gandhi is pro-Japanese. Those who have watched the whole play through know well the foolishness of such an insinuation. For when the Allies were yet silent, some of them openly favouring Japan, Gandhi and the Congress were condemning her actions in no uncertain terms. “Your country should be ashamed of what she is doing,” he announced to a Japanese visitor at his ashram. “She is taking bites out of the living body of China.” He

never minces matters. Though his method is sometimes devastating, it is also refreshing after the humbug of diplomatic flattery which changes so quickly to venom when not successful. As soon as he received fully documented evidence of Japan's insidious drug traffic in North China, he unhesitatingly published the full facts in *Harijan*, believing that the kindest thing he could do for friend or foe was to speak the truth, however unpalatable that truth might be.

To the charge that he was willing to negotiate with Japan to allow her a large measure of civil control, military bases and right of passage, he replied without hesitation, "I maintain that I could not be guilty of harbouring any such thoughts attributed to me."

I do not want to help the Japanese—not even for freeing India (he declares in *Harijan*, June 21, 1942). India, during the last fifty years or more of her struggle for freedom, has learnt the lesson of patriotism, and of not bowing to any foreign yoke.....Remember, I am more interested than the British in keeping the Japanese out. For Britain's defeat in Indian waters may mean only the loss of India, but, if Japan wins, India loses everything.

And again :

If the Japanese compel the Allies to retire from India to a safer base, I cannot say today that the whole of India will be up in arms against the Japanese. I have a fear that they may degrade themselves as some Burmans did. I WANT INDIA TO OPPOSE JAPAN TO A MAN. IF INDIA WERE FREE SHE WOULD DO IT, it would be a new experience to her, in twenty-four hours her mind would be changed. All parties would then act as one man. If this live independence is declared today, I have no doubt India becomes a powerful ally..... I say that if the war is to be decisively won, India must be freed to play her part today. I find no flaw in my position. I have arrived at it after considerable debating within myself ; I am doing nothing in anger or hurry. THERE IS NOT THE SLIGHTEST ROOM IN ME FOR ACCOMMODATING THE JAPANESE.....I WOULD RATHER BE SHOT THAN SUBMIT TO JAPANESE OR ANY OTHER POWER.

Following his usual method of direct approach, he writes an Open Letter to the Japanese :

I must confess at the outset that though I have no ill-will against you, I intensely dis-

like your attack upon China.

he begins. Then, after referring to many pleasant recollections he has of Japanese people, he continues :

I grieve deeply as I contemplate what appears to me to be your unprovoked attack against China, and, if reports are to be believed, your merciless devastation of that great and ancient land.

It was a worthy ambition of yours to take equal rank with the great Powers of the world. Your aggression against China and your alliance with the Axis Powers was surely an unwarranted excess of that ambition.

I should have thought that you would be proud of the fact that that great and ancient people, whose old classical literature you have adopted as your own, are your neighbours. Your understanding of one another's history, tradition, literature, should bind you as friends rather than make you the enemies you are today.

If I was a free man, and if you allowed me to come to your country, frail though I am, I would not mind risking my health, maybe my life, to come to your country to plead with

you to desist from the wrong you are doing to China and the world and therefore to yourself.

But I enjoy no such freedom. And we are in the unique position of having to resist an imperialism that we detest no less than yours and Nazism. OUR RESISTANCE TO IT DOES NOT MEAN HARM TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE. WE SEEK TO CONVERT THEM. OURS IS AN UNARMED REVOLT AGAINST BRITISH RULE. AN IMPORTANT PARTY IN THE COUNTRY IS ENGAGED IN A DEADLY, BUT FRIENDLY, QUARREL WITH THE FOREIGN RULERS.

BUT IN THIS THEY NEED NO AID FROM FOREIGN POWERS. You have been gravely misinformed, as I know you are, that we have chosen this particular moment to embarrass the Allies when your attack against India is imminent. IF WE WANTED TO TURN BRITAIN'S DIFFICULTY INTO OUR OPPORTUNITY WE SHOULD HAVE DONE IT AS SOON AS THE WAR BROKE OUT NEARLY THREE YEARS AGO.

Our movement regarding the withdrawal of British power from India should in no way be misunderstood. In fact, if we are to believe your reported anxiety for the Independence of India, a recognition of that Inde-

pendence by Britain should leave you no excuse for any attack on India. Moreover, the reported profession sorts ill with your ruthless aggression against China.

I would ask you to make no mistake about the fact that you will be sadly disillusioned if you believe that you will receive a willing welcome from India. THE END AND AIM OF THE MOVEMENT FOR BRITISH WITHDRAWAL IS TO PREPARE INDIA, BY MAKING HER FREE, FOR RESISTING ALL MILITARIST AND IMPERIALIST AMBITION, whether it is called British Imperialism, German Nazism, or your pattern. If we do not, we shall have been ignoble spectators of the militarization of the world in spite of our belief that in non-violence we have the only solvent of the militarist spirit and ambition. Personally I fear that without declaring the Independence of India the Allied Powers will not be able to beat the Axis combination which has raised violence to the dignity of a religion. The Allies cannot beat you and your partners unless they beat you in your ruthless and skilled warfare. If they copy it, their declaration that they will save the world for democracy and individual freedom must



come to nought. I feel that they can only gain strength to avoid copying your ruthlessness by declaring and recognizing *now* the freedom of India, and turning sullen India's forced co-operation into freed India's voluntary co-operation.

To Britain and the Allies, we have appealed in the name of justice, in proof of their professions, and in their own self-interest. To you I appeal in the name of humanity. It is a marvel to me that you do not see the ruthless warfare is nobody's monopoly. If not the Allies, some other Power will certainly improve upon your method and beat you with your own weapon. Even if you win, you will leave no legacy to your people of which they would feel proud. They cannot take pride in a recital of cruel deeds however skilfully achieved.

Even if you win it will not prove that you were in the right, it will only prove that your power of destruction was greater. This applies obviously to the Allies, too, unless they perform *now* the just and righteous act of freeing India as an earnest and promise of similarly freeing all other subject peoples in Asia and Africa.

Our appeal to Britain is coupled with the

offer of Free India's willingness to let the Allies retain their troops in India. The offer is made in order to prove that we do not in any way mean harm to the Allied Cause, and in order to prevent you from being misled into feeling that you have but to step into the country that Britain has vacated. Needless to repeat that if you cherish any such idea and will carry it out, WE WILL NOT FAIL IN RESISTING YOU WITH ALL THE MIGHT THAT OUR COUNTRY CAN MUSTER. I address this appeal to you in the hope that our movement may even influence you and your partners in the right direction and deflect you and them from the course which is bound to end in your moral ruin and the reduction of human beings to robots.

The hope of your response to my appeal is much fainter than that of response from Britain. I know that the British are not devoid of a sense of justice, and they know me. I do not know you enough to be able to judge. All I have read tells me that you listen to no appeal but to the sword. How I wish you are cruelly misrepresented, and that I shall have touched the right chord in your heart. Anyway, I have an undying faith in the responsiveness

of human nature. On the strength of that faith I have conceived the impending movement in India, and it is that faith which has prompted this appeal to you. (*Harijan*, July 18, 1942.)

Naive, wishful thinking of a simple-minded old man ! Maybe, maybe not ! But surely only a mischievous, or fear-obsessed mind could read into such a letter the negotiations of a traitor.

Then comes an accusation of harbouring ill-will against the British, and in trying to explain his position, Gandhi starts a hare :

India has no quarrel with the British people. I have hundreds of British friends. Andrews' friendship was enough to tie me to the British people. Both he and I were fixed in our determination that British rule in India in any shape or form must go. Hitherto the rulers have answered, "We would gladly retire if we knew to whom to hand over the reins." My answer is, "Leave India to God. If that is too much, then leave her to Anarchy !"

If only Andrews had been there ! He might have been able to warn him in time against such a reckless use of words, and explain their probable

effect on an English mind. Bad enough to talk to the twentieth century of leaving a country to God. But to Anarchy ! ! ! How would the well-regulated British react to such a picture ? Would they not rush at the obvious popular meaning of the word ? Indeed, with politicians leading the way, the public was soon giving chase. They did not stay to enquire what was at the back of his mind, nor to listen to what else he had to say. Why should they ? The hare was off !

The few who remained behind to reason had a little light thrown on the subject, as Gandhi continued :

That anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time or to unrestrained dacoities.

Most politicians, anxious to plead their cause, would have kept such a skeleton out of sight. But he never believes in secrecy or camouflage, and willingly displays all his wares, good, bad and indifferent.

From these a true India will rise in place of the false one we see.....The present insecurity is chronic, and therefore not so much felt. But a disease that is not felt is worse than one that is felt. (*Harijan*, May 24, 1942.)

He returns to the word, ANARCHY :

I have mentioned anarchy. I am convinced that we are living in a state of ordered anarchy. It is a misnomer to call such rule as is established in India a rule which promotes the welfare of India. Therefore this ordered, disciplined anarchy should go, and if there is complete lawlessness in India as a result, I would risk it, though I believe, and should like to believe, that twenty-two years of continuous effort at educating India along the lines of non-violence, will not have gone in vain, and people will evolve popular order out of chaos. (*Harijan*, May 24, 1942.)

Two months later, he tries to clarify his meaning still further :

I said, "Leave India to God or Anarchy." But in practice what will happen is this. IF WITHDRAWAL TAKES PLACE IN PERFECT GOOD-WILL, the change will be effected without the slightest disturbance.....Wise people from among the responsible sections will come together, and will evolve a provisional government. THERE WILL BE NO ANARCHY, NO INTERRUPTION, and A CROWNING GLORY. (*Harijan*, July 19, 1942.)

The Dreamer ! Can't he hear the voice of Mr. Jinnah refusing to co-operate with Hindus ? Doesn't he know that he has the Moslem League against him ? Oh yes, he can hear ; and for years he has been watching the poison of communal dissension seeping through the political life of India. He has seen, too, the growing opposition to himself and his humanitarian philosophy of both the extreme Hindus of the Mahasabha, and the extreme Moslems of the Moslem League. But he knows, too—and this the British people do not realize—that Jinnah, in spite of his loud protestations, backed by reactionary forces in other countries, does *not* represent the whole Moslem community of India, though he has a considerable and important following. Twenty-five per cent, perhaps, a few years ago. More now, maybe, since he has been encouraged in his retrogressive policy of whipping up religious feeling in the country. Nevertheless, in the background are millions of Moslem peasants and workers who disclaim his right to speak for them. There are great Moslem leaders, too, like Maulana Azad—Moslem President of the Congress, and scholar of world-renown, the Khan brothers and others, both within and without the Congress fold, who deplore Jinnah's bitter attacks on their Hindu friends. Among

ordinary Congress members are many Moslems. They are pledged to work always for Hindu-Moslem unity, to assess the worth of a man not by the religious label he wears but by the service of his life. Of course, they do not always live up to their high ideal—who does ? There are rivalries within Congress ranks, as elsewhere, but they are largely the rivalries of struggling politicians who, like politicians all over the world, sometimes sacrifice the best in themselves to secure plums of office.

After many years of experience and careful watching, Gandhi has rightly or wrongly come to the conclusion that not until those outside influences are removed, which in turn flatter or condemn the various struggling factions, will men face each other, see reason, recognize their common responsibility, and go forward—not as Moslems, Hindus, Parsees, etc., but as INDIANS. Hence the need for the withdrawal of the Paramount Power which has extended or withheld its favours at will during all these long years of British-Indian relationship, creating, not always consciously, jealousies and rivalries between sections that should be working as one. To the sceptical who contend that Hindus and Moslems could not possibly work peaceably together, Gandhi would doubtless reply that these are

the days of miracles—Chiang Kai Shek with the Communists in China, Churchill with Soviet Russia ! He would point, also, to the record of the 'self-governing provinces from 1935 to 1937. Though it has become customary for Congress detractors to maintain, probably with a degree of truth, that Hindu domination during that period antagonized the Moslems, it remains true also that the British Governors who had been left as safeguards, and whose duty it was to interfere if the rights of religious minorities were not respected, found no just cause for intervention. Indeed the Viceroy paid tribute to the able administration. The man who openly found fault at the time was Gandhi himself. Unhesitatingly he condemned in the pages of his own paper every error, big or small, committed by his own people, refusing to connive at any religious discrimination. But though admittedly mistakes were made, achievement outshone them, and by those very mistakes Hindus and Moslems alike should know how to act more wisely in future. Meanwhile no man has worked more honestly, more tirelessly, risking time and again his popularity by open criticism of his friends, weaknesses, than Mohandas Gandhi. No man has watched more carefully the signs and portents of his time. When he is driven sorrowfully to the conclusion



that British Withdrawal must precede Hindu-Moslem Unity, his opinion is surely worthy of attention, though we may still remain unconvinced.

But what about the Princes of Royal India? Will they not be an obstacle? Yes, indeed! But Gandhi puts the solution in a nutshell. "They should cease to be Princes and become servants of the people." He amplifies his statement:

They will have to descend from their pedestal and seek the co-operation of their people.....They will have to be genuine servants of the people. When they do so, no one will think of eliminating them. If they do justice, I can hardly think of the people wanting to pay off old scores. Our people are not of a revengeful nature. Is the ruler of Aundh afraid of any rebellion in his State? He is not, for whom will they rebel against when they know that he has divested himself of practically all power? If they want to rebel, I think he is capable of saying to them, "Come and take charge of my palace, I shall be content to go and stay among the poorest of you." Appasaheb, the son of the Chief of Aundh, is slaving away for the people as no servant of the State does.....

Let them do two things. One is that they have to purify their lives and reduce themselves to utter simplicity. The fabulous amounts they spend on themselves are unconscionable. I cannot understand how they can have the heart to squander the people's money in riotous living, when thousands of their people cannot get a square meal a day. Why should they not be content with two or three hundred rupees a month? But my point is this. Let them take what the people will give them. Their privy purse must be votable. No reforms and no budget can have any value unless the people have the fullest right to say how much their ruler will take for himself. A new age has already begun, and no ruler can conceivably be tolerated whose life does not correspond largely with the life of his people and who does not identify himself with them. . . . As for the Congress, let them know that it is ever ready to come to an understanding with them. The Congress is essentially a non-violent organization. Let the Princes voluntarily go under the authority of their people and the Congress will befriend them. . . . The Congress, let me repeat, is not out to destroy the Princes, unless it

be that they do not mend their ways and destroy themselves. Even if there is *one* Prince who will be content to be the servant of the people the Congress will stand by him. (*Harijan*, July 13, 1940.)

Certainly there are difficulties ahead, but they are not insurmountable. In a world which moves towards freedom and democracy the days of the Princes as despotic rulers are necessarily numbered. They are already an anachronism. Numbers of them are Princes by rights conferred and not by royal birth, and those treaties with Britain which guarantee the maintenance of their present privileges call for revision, not perpetuation. Most of the Princes are reactionary, though a few, such as the ruler of Aundh, are outstandingly progressive. Once the support of the alien power is removed, they will know better how to come to terms with their own countrymen, and perhaps be ready to recognize the rights and aspirations of their downtrodden subjects.

But then there are the Untouchables ! and their unyielding, adamant leaders, Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Raja. A real problem here, but not insoluble. These two political leaders seek to ensure the rights of the Untouchables by political measures ; Gandhī, by removing the curse of Untouch-

ability altogether. It is well known in India, but less known in Britain, with what great success he has struck at the very root of the disease. Untouchability is doomed. It was always, according to advanced Hindu thinkers, a spurious growth, and excrescence on Hinduism. One finds excrescences—though not so widely discussed and universally condemned—even on comparatively modern religions like Christianity which in Africa refuses the black brother a seat in the white man's church, in spite of the fact that Christ came himself from the East and declared that all men are equal in the sight of God. Hinduism is hoary with age and has gathered to itself many incongruous appendages, of which Untouchability is one. Ambedkar, himself born an Untouchable fights honestly and courageously, by political methods, for the recognition of the rights of Untouchables, and is an acknowledged leader. But vast masses of Untouchables are behind Gandhi. And why? Because for years he has been out in the villages, in close contact with them, humbly serving them, proud to call himself an Untouchable, an Outcast (though born into a caste) until Untouchability is swept away. They know how often the old man has risked his very life for them, both when opposing what he deemed the unjust (though not

necessarily wilfully unjust) legislation of the Paramount Power, and when braving the staged opposition of religious fanatics. To the Rulers, Untouchables are the Depressed Classes, or Scheduled Classes. They make laws for them which for the most part they dare not enforce lest they create trouble by interfering with long-established social customs, or abuses. But to Gandhi, Untouchables are Harijans, Children of God, in whose cause he dares anything. It has been the privilege of only a very few British people to watch him at work among his untouchable brethren. Only the very few have personally witnessed their pathetic appeals to him to provide wells for them, schools and hospitals, and—when he has performed the miracle—seen them bringing to him their love-offerings of quaint toys in the shape of birds and animals that they have fashioned out of leaves, flowers and seeds. Only the very few have accompanied him on his Anti-Untouchability Campaigns, heard him without any tricks of oratory but with a few challenging words stir the consciences of his hearers so that the rich deprived themselves of their bangles, and the poorest of peasants searched in the corner of a sari for half a pice, in response to his appeal that they should blot out untouchability for ever from their hearts and do

justice to those whom they have wronged for so long. Only the very few. But because of what they have seen, they know that no power on earth, whether political or religious, will be able to tear Gandhi out of the hearts of the common people of India. Opposition may be artificially whipped up for a time, and ignorant crowds swayed temporarily by a clever tongue. But they will return to their beloved leader, as did the paid demonstrators who waved black flags in his face but lowered them in shame when he walked fearlessly through their midst. Up went the flags again, but the rude slogans they had learnt by heart for the occasion were lost in the old familiar cry, Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai ! (Welcome and Victory).

So knowing his India, with all her faults and failings, reactions and resentments, sensing the underground currents with uncanny precision, Gandhi moves doggedly forward, free from all the alarms and excursions of the ignorant and unsure. True the right way is costly. Who knows it better than he ? But it is sure. All other paths are not only costly, but unsure.

Even at the risk of being called mad, I had to tell the truth if I was to be true to myself (he tells us). I regarded it as my solid contribution to the war, and to India's deliverance

from the peril that is and that is threatening. I am showing the futility of hatred. I am showing that hatred injures the hater, never the hated. An Imperial Power cannot do otherwise than it has been doing....and I am therefore trying to wean the people from their hatred by asking them to develop the strength of mind to invite the British to withdraw, and at the same time to resist the Japanese....With the British withdrawal the incentive to welcome the Japanese goes, and the strength felt in securing British withdrawal will be used for stemming the Japanese inroad.....The British presence invites the Japanese....It promotes communal disunion and other discords, and, what is perhaps the worst of all, deepens the hatred born of impotence. Orderly British withdrawal will turn the hatred into affection, and will automatically remove communal distemper. So far as I can see, the two communities are unable to think or see things in their proper perspective as long as they are under the influence of a third power. (*Harijan*, May 31, 1942.)

But—here is another very practical objection. What about China? Isn't Gandhi supposed to be a friend of China, and isn't he now vitiating

all claim to be so called ? The answer is swift and emphatic :

No. I remain the passionate friend of China that I have always claimed to be. I know what loss of freedom means. Therefore I could not but be in sympathy with China, which is my next-door neighbour in distress. AND IF I BELIEVED IN VIOLENCE AND IF I COULD INFLUENCE INDIA, I WOULD PUT IN MOTION EVERY FORCE AT MY COMMAND ON BEHALF OF CHINA TO SAVE HER LIBERTY.... But because I have China in mind, I feel that the only effective way for India to help China is to persuade Great Britain to free India, and LET A FREE INDIA MAKE HER FULL CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR EFFORT. INSTEAD OF BEING SULLEN AND DISCONTENTED, INDIA FREE WILL BE A MIGHTY FORCE FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND IN GENERAL. It is true that the solution I have suggested is a heroic solution, beyond the ken of Englishmen. But, being a true friend of Britain, of Russia, of China, I must not suppress the solution which I believe to be eminently practical, and probably the only one in order to save the situation, and IN ORDER TO CONVERT THE WAR INTO A POWER FOR GOOD, INSTEAD OF BEING WHAT IT IS—



A PERIL TO HUMANITY. Pandit Nehru told me yesterday that he heard people saying in Lahore and Delhi that I have turned pro-Japanese. I could only laugh at the suggestion, for if I am sincere in my passion for freedom, I could not consciously or unconsciously take a step which will involve India in merely changing masters. If, in spite of my resistance with my whole soul, the mishap occurs, of which I have never denied the possibility, then the blame would wholly rest upon British shoulders. I have no shadow of doubt about it. I have made no suggestion which, even from the military standpoint, is fraught with the slightest danger to British power or to Chinese. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT INDIA IS NOT ALLOWED TO PULL HER WEIGHT IN FAVOUR OF CHINA. If British power is withdrawn from India in an orderly manner, Britain will be relieved of the burden of keeping the peace in India, and at the same time gain—in a free India—an ally, not in the cause of Empire—because she would have renounced *in toto* all her imperial designs—but in a defence, not pretended, but wholly real, of human freedom. (*Harijan*, June 21, 1942.)

Rabindranath Tagore, afire himself with the

same zeal for true freedom having the same deep understanding of the realities beneath all the shams, believing that the day would yet come when a mocking world would see the Truth, might well have written to him his song :

They call you mad. Wait for to-morrow  
and keep silent.

They throw dust upon your head. Wait for  
to-morrow. They will bring their wreath.

They sit apart in their high seat. Wait  
for to-morrow. They will come down  
and bend their head.\*

But not yet. For, as in the days of Stephen, men "have stopped their ears" that they might have more power with which to stone him.

To leading officials in Whitehall, Gandhi remains, by their own confession, an enigmatic personality. New Delhi, we are told, knows only his worst, not his best side. Enigmatic personalities must be either understood or condemned. To understand entails exhausting mental gymnastics which do not commend themselves to everyone. Moreover, men in authority carry heavy burdens. It is quicker and simpler to condemn. So the mys-

\*Poems : *Rabindranath Tagore*. VISVA BHARATI, 2, College Square, Calcutta. First Published February, 1942.

teries remain unsolved, and Gandhi-Government relationship continues in an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust.

Gandhi's Non-violence, for instance, what a bogey it has been to the official and public mind ! Yet in essence it is a simple enough doctrine, if in detail mysterious. He begins with a fundamental fact, which is being increasingly recognized even by those to whom the word Non-violence is anathema, that unless there are to be wars and worse wars until the human race finally exhausts itself and destroys itself mentally, morally and physically, a substitute for war must be found. Practical minded Gandhi has dared to begin to find it, and has had the effrontery to tell the world that he believes he is on the right track. For nearly half a century he has been making experiments. Time after time he has failed, but he goes ahead with the courage of the scientist who, ignoring the jibes and jeers of fellow men, works his way through to the discovery of steam power or electricity, and bequeaths upon the scoffers the benefits of all his absurdities. Gandhi's is an even more difficult task, for his experiments deal with the things of the spirit. Both for him, and for those who work with him, there must be severe training and discipline, and a readiness to make great sacrifices. This Non-

violence, he says, is an active force of the highest order. It is dynamic, it acts positively. It is, he says, "Soul-force", and if wars are to cease we have to learn how to pit it against "Brute-force". This demands high courage, both physical and spiritual, for it involves a man in refusing to co-operate with evil in any shape or form, whether within himself, in the home, in the social sphere, politics, or international relationships. All tyranny must be resisted with the whole of himself—mind, body and spirit, whether it be the open tyranny of a Hitler or the more subtle forms that lie behind the dissemblings of modern life. His aim is, not to annihilate evil-doers but the evil thing itself which produces evil-doers and will go on producing them until it is itself removed. Translated into particular and topical terms, India must seek to remove British rule, but without doing harm to British people. The doctrine has, however, also a universal application. For Gandhi it is not only a policy, but a creed by which he lives, a creed which controls the whole of his being. His whole life is a search for Truth, which for him is God, and the Way to Him, he says, is Non-violence.

Foolish, complicated prattlings. Perhaps, perhaps not. It is certainly not surprising that non-sympathizers, caught up in world war, and needing all

their energies for the task in hand, turn impatiently away. Then a new thought comes to them. Is he going to try out these fancy notions if Japan attacks in India? All very well using this non-violence rubbish against us, but what about foreign aggression? They are suspicious, almost afraid.

If only they would listen to what Gandhi himself has to say about it! Then they would soon discover that although Gandhi may see further into the world's tomorrow than most of us, he also has his feet firmly placed on the ground of the world's today. Moreover, he is a true believer in freedom, other people's as well as his own, and knows that they do not, for the most part, think as he does. He is too much of a realist to imagine that many people are ready to experiment with his costly doctrine. Under his leadership, India is prepared to be non-violent in her struggle against British Power, but the majority believe in armed resistance to Japan. Since, therefore, he cannot guarantee foolproof non-violent action from India to keep the Japanese away, he personally would not ask the Allies to withdraw their troops. He would be asking them to do something that might result in the Japanese occupation of India, and China's sure fall:

Neither Britain nor America share my faith

in non-violence. I am unable to state that the non-violent effort will make India proof against Japanese or any other aggression. I am not even able to claim that the whole of India is non-violent in the sense required. In the circumstances, it would be hypocritical on my part to insist on the immediate withdrawal of the Allied Powers in jeopardy. So long, therefore, as India lacks faith in the capacity of non-violence to protect her against aggression from without, the demand for the withdrawal of the Allied Troops during the pendency of the war would itself be an act of violence, if the controllers of the troops felt it necessary for their defence to keep them in India for that purpose and that alone. (*Harijan*, June 26, 1942.)

Though he has obviously squarely faced the fact that his dream cannot yet be realized, he must at the same time remain true himself to the vision he has seen. His difficulty henceforth, whenever the problem of the defence of India arises, is how to deal simultaneously with the question from his own viewpoint and that of the people who do not believe in his way. Hence his dual reasoning, and the continual, perplexing criss-cross of statements to which it gives rise. Hence

the criticism, often very honest criticism, of those who would gladly understand him if they could but are driven to say in despair that he believes in non-violence and violence at one and the same time, which is self-contradictory and proves him an impostor, or at the best a deluded fanatic.

“Will Free India carry out total mobilization, and adopt methods of total war?” asks a journalist. And Gandhi replies :

The question is legitimate but beyond me. I can only say Free India will make common cause with the Allies. I cannot say Free India will take part in militarism, or choose to go the non-violent way. (*Harijan*, July 19, 1942.)

But here his dream imposes itself on his thinking. For a few moments the idealist in him holds sway, and he toys with the entrancing idea of a non-violent India. After all, has he not spent most of his life trying to lead his country along that path? No man ever loved his cigar, fondled his racehorse or cherished his model yacht more than Gandhi has loved, fondled and cherished Non-violence :

But I can say without hesitation that if I can turn India to non-violence I will cer-

tainly do it.....If I succeed in converting forty crores of people to non-violence it will be a tremendous thing, a wonderful transformation. (*Harijan*, July 19, 1942.)

It is a leader of men speaking ; he feels himself there—in the midst of his people—leading them on in a great adventure such as the world has never yet seen. The same spirit—though in so different a form—that drives men “over the top” in the thrill of battle.

But he is soon dragged back to realities. “You wouldn’t oppose a militarist effort by civil disobedience ?” questions a reporter.

“I have no such desire,” he replies, with a certain weariness. Will men never understand what he is trying to tell them ? “I cannot oppose Free India with Civil Disobedience. It would be wrong.” (*Harijan*, July 19, 1942.)

In a further statement he is more explicit. Someone has asked to what extent he would carry out his non-violence policy after freedom was gained.

The question hardly arises. I am using the first personal pronoun for brevity, but I am trying to represent the spirit of India as I conceive it. What policy the national



government will adopt I cannot say. I may not even survive it, much as I would love to. If I do, I would advise the adoption of non-violence to the utmost extent possible and that will be India's great contribution to the peace of the world and the establishment of New World Order. I expect that with the existence of so many martial races in India, all of whom will have a voice in the government of the day, the national policy will incline towards militarism of modified character. I shall certainly hope that all the effort for the last twenty-two years to show the efficacy of non-violence as a political force will not have gone in vain and a strong party representing true non-violence will exist in the country. (*Harijan*.)

And again :

If India were to listen to me she would give non-violent help to China. But I know that will not be so. Free India would want to be militarist. (*Harijan*, July 26, 1942.)

Some mischief-maker alleges that an important Congress leader in personal contact with Gandhi, had reported that Gandhi expected Britain to lose the war.

I wish (says Gandhi) that you could have given the name of the leader. I have no hesitation in saying that it is not true. On the contrary I said that the British were hard to beat. The British reverses ought not to create panic in the land. In all the wars that Britain has fought or in which she has been engaged, there have been reverses—some of which may be considered disastrous. But the British have a knack of surviving them and turning them into stones to success. Failures do not dismay or demoralize them. They take them with calmness and in a sportsmanlike spirit....let us at least learn their calmness in the face of misfortunes. I have no decisive opinion about the result of the war. (*Harijan*, June 7, 1942.)

And again, two months later :

I have never, even in the most unguarded moment, expressed the opinion that Japan and Germany would win the war. Not only that, I have often expressed the opinion that they cannot win the war if only Britain will once and for all shed her Imperialism. (*Reuter*, August 4, 1942.)

July 14, 1942. Memorable date in the story of Britain and India. Gandhi's early draft of the Quit India resolution had been sent to the Congress Working Committee for what the author called the "dotting of many i's and crossing of many t's," and it gave rise to a great deal of controversy. The members of the Committee, trained by Gandhi always to be honest in the expression of opinion, found much to quarrel with in the Resolution, and commented freely on its ambiguous wording calculated to give rise to interpretations which they knew were not in Gandhi's mind. The assistant secretary took notes unofficially—brief, disjointed notes, sometimes only a few sentences torn from their context, and likely to give a wrong impression to anyone but the man who had jotted them down. It was this draft and these comments which the Government, seized when it raided Congress premises, and later made public, giving rise to much misunderstanding. The actual draft accepted by the Working Committee on July 14 was Nehru's improved version of the original Quit India demand. It was, in the eyes of India, a challenge to Britain to "act desperately in the moral field, as she never hesitates to act desperately in the physical field, and take grave risks."

The Resolution is long, necessarily. Most citizens of our British democracy, though claiming the right to rule over India's three hundred and fifty million souls, have never read it through. It is with the last part only that they are familiar, with the threat of a mass movement—open, non-violent rebellion—to be launched if conditions are not met. "Threat," says Britain. "We will never negotiate with people who hold a pistol to our heads." "Warning," says India. A reversal of the position when a British politician, very early in the war, threatened, or warned, India that if Gandhi or Congress proved troublesome they would be checked by repressive measures. "Warning," said Britain. "Threat," said India, but went on negotiating. It is a question of words.

Let us place on ourselves the discipline of listening to the Resolution. We may approve or disapprove ; hear it in anger or in shame. Or we may not know what to make of it at all. But without having read it we have no right to any opinion about it whatever. Let us see it in its true setting—as an urgent appeal from a nation which for years has been struggling for freedom, and is still unfree, though ordered to join in the world war to preserve the freedom of others. Let us remember, too, the years of patient nego-

tiation, interspersed with incidents of non-violent action, since 1939.

Events happening from day to day and the experience which 'the people of India are passing through, confirm the opinion of Congressmen that British rule in India must end immediately, not merely because foreign domination, even at its best, is evil in itself and a continuing injury to the subject people, but because India in bondage can play no effective part in defending herself and in affecting the fortunes of war that are desolating humanity.

The freedom of India is thus necessary not only in the interests of India but also for the safety of the world and for ending Nazism, Fascism, Militarism and other forms of Imperialism, and the aggression of one nation over another.

Ever since the outbreak of the world war, Congress has studiously pursued a policy of non-embarrassment. Even at the risk of making its Satyagraha (Civil Disobedience) ineffective, it deliberately gave it a symbolic character in the hope that this policy of non-embarrassment, carried to its logical extreme,

would be duly appreciated and that real power would be transferred to popular representatives so as to enable the nation to make its fullest contribution towards the realization of human freedom throughout the world which is in danger of being crushed.

It also hoped negatively that nothing would be done which was calculated to tighten Britain's hold on India.

These hopes, however, were dashed to pieces ; the abortive Cripps proposals showed in the clearest possible manner that there was no change in the British Government's attitude to India and that British hold on India was in no way to be relaxed.

In their negotiations with Sir Stafford Cripps, Congress representatives tried their utmost to achieve the minimum consistent with national demand, but it was of no avail.

This frustration resulted in a rapid and widespread increase of ill-will against Britain and a growing satisfaction at the success of Japanese arms.

The Working Committee view this development with grave apprehension, as this, unless checked, will inevitably lead to the passive acceptance of aggression.

The Committee hold that all aggression must be resisted, for any submission to it must mean degradation of the Indian people and the continuation of their subjection.

Congress is anxious to avoid the experience of Malaya, Singapore and Burma, and desires to build up resistance to any aggression or invasion of India by the Japanese or any foreign power.

Congress would change the present ill-will against Britain to good-will and make India a willing partner in the joint enterprise of securing freedom for the nations and the peoples of the world and in trials and tribulations which accompany it.

This is only possible if India feels the glow of freedom.

Congress representatives have tried their utmost to bring about a solution of the communal tangle. But this is made impossible by the presence of a foreign power and only after ending foreign domination and intervention can the present unreality give place to reality and the people of India, belonging to all groups and parties, face India's problems and solve them on a mutual agreed basis.

The present political parties formed chief-

ly with a view to attracting the attention of and influencing British power, will then probably cease to function.

For the first time in India's history, the realization will come home that the Princes, Jagirdars, Zamindars and propertied and monied classes derive their wealth and property from workers in the fields, factories and elsewhere, to whom essentially power and authority must belong.

On the withdrawal of British rule from India, responsible men and women of the country will come together to form a provisional government representative of all important sections of the people of India, which will later evolve a scheme whereby a Constituent Assembly can be convened in order to prepare a constitution for the Government of India acceptable to all sections of the people.

The representatives of Free India and Great Britain will confer together for the adjustment of future relations and for the co-operation of the two countries as allies for a common cause in meeting aggression.

It is the earnest desire of Congress to enable India to resist aggression effectively with the People's united will and strength behind it.



In making the proposal for the withdrawal of British rule from India, Congress has no desire whatever to embarrass Great Britain or the Allied powers in their prosecution of the war or in any way to encourage aggression on India or, of course, pressure on China by the Japanese or any other power associated with Axis group.

Nor is it the Congress intention to jeopardize the defensive capacity of the Allied powers.

Congress is therefore agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India should they so desire in order to ward off and resist Japanese or other aggression and to protect and help China.

The proposal for the withdrawal of British power from India was never intended to mean the physical withdrawal of all Britons from India and certainly not those who would make India their home and live there as citizens and as equals with others.

If such a withdrawal takes place with goodwill, it would result in establishing a stable provisional government in India and co-operation between this Government and the United Nations in resisting aggression and helping China.

Congress realizes that there may be risks involved in such a course. Such risks, however, have to be faced by any country in order to achieve freedom, and more especially at the present critical juncture in order to save the country and the larger cause of freedom the world over from far greater risks and perils.

While, therefore, Congress is impatient to achieve its national purpose, it wishes to take no hasty step and would like to avoid as far as possible any course of action that might embarrass the United Nations.

Congress would plead with British power to accept the very reasonable and just proposals herein made not only in the interests of India, but also in those of freedom and of the cause of freedom to which the United Nations proclaim their allegiance.

Should, however, this appeal fail, Congress cannot view without the gravest apprehension the continuation of the present state of affairs, involving progressive deterioration in the situation and the weakening of India's will and power to resist aggression.

Congress will then reluctantly be compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength it has gathered since 1920 when it adopted non-

violence as part of its policy for the vindication of its political rights and liberties.

Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi.

- As the issues raised are of the most vital and far-reaching importance to the people of India as well as to the peoples of the United Nations, the Working Committee will refer them to the All-India Congress Committee for a final decision.

One catches the echo of historic words,  
LET MY PEOPLE GO.

Like Moses, Gandhi believes that he is acting under divine compulsion and he speaks with the voice and authority of a prophet. Moses was not prepared to stay and argue as to whether the moment was propitious, whether some of the people of Israel would rather remain in bondage, whether they would quarrel among themselves in the wilderness, whether the few who had enjoyed the rulers' favour would be worse off in freedom and sigh for the flesh-pots of Egypt. He doubtless foresaw all the difficulties. Indeed, he was to experience some of them, even to the smashing of graven images. (But the Lord received his message he must need deliver it. No The

results were in God's hands. Similarly Gandhi, God-inspired or suffering from delusions—who can tell?—delivers his message, and waits. Pharaoh hardened his heart, thereby bringing plagues upon his own country for which he blamed Moses, and the people took the freedom he would not give. What will Britain do?

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Sevagram is soon buzzing with reporters. Once more Gandhi has placed all his cards on the table and men are at liberty to question him closely. In the quick give and take of conversation, he deals with matters of grave importance. The resolution has made it quite clear that he intends to go forward. Independence *now*, or the present Government must be brought to a stand-still, so that the Paramount Power and the world may know how serious is the situation. He has no desire to launch civil disobedience. He knows full well the suffering that it will bring to his people, and the risks that will have to be run. Only in the last resort, when he can see no other hope, will he attempt it. Even then it will be of a strictly non-violent character, and very carefully handled.

It is not my intention to undertake at

once any overwhelming programme. I want to watch and see, because whatever may be said to the contrary, even in conducting the movement, I want to guard against a sudden outburst of anarchy or a state of things which may be calculated to invite Japanese aggression. I believe that India's demand is fundamental, it is indispensable for national existence as I conceive it to be. Therefore I shall take every precaution I can to handle the movement gently, but I would not hesitate to go to the extremest limit, if I find that no impression is produced on the British Government or the Allied Powers. I hold it to be legitimate to make the Allied Powers responsible for all that may happen in India, because it is open to them in the interests of the common cause to prevent the happening of anything that might disturb the even course of the war. . . . I am not ready with a planned programme as yet. (*Harijan*, July 26, 1942.)

Assuming that the All-India Congress Committee confirms the resolution, there will still be time given, he explains, before launching the campaign. Moreover, he would like to see the Viceroy again before entering on such a struggle.

Why not call a truce ?

This struggle has been conceived in order to avert a catastrophe. At the critical moment an unfree India is likely to become a hindrance rather than a help. The Congress resolution itself hints at the possibility of a large number of Indians going over to the Japanese side—if they effected a landing on Indian shores—as we now know happened in Burma, Malaya, and for aught I know, Singapore too. I am of the opinion that this might have been prevented at least so far as Burma is concerned, if she had been made independent. But it was not done. We know the result. We are determined so far as is humanly possible to secure our Independence, so that no Indian worth the name would then think of going over to the Japanese side. It would then become as much India's interest as the Allies' interest to resist Japanese aggression with all her might. (*Harijan*, July 26, 1942.)

But why couldn't he, through his own great influence, get the masses to listen to him and rally to Britain's cause?

Here he explains that not the combined influence of the whole of the Working Committee (which would include Nehru, Azad and himself)

“could enthuse the masses for the Allied Cause which they do not, cannot understand.” Referring to his experiences in the last war, into which he had thrown himself heart and soul he tells how, as a recruiting agent for the British, he had begun his agency in a district where he had just been leading, with fair success, a campaign for agricultural relief. He should have made headway there. But though he walked miles in the burning sun in order to impress the people with the urgency of the situation, he could not rouse them. Though successful in conducting campaigns for redress of popular grievances—because people are ready and need a helper—he has no influence, he declares, in directing people’s energies into a channel in which they have no interest.

But will not American opinion be antagonized ?

Of course it may be. But I have never embarked on any campaign in the belief that I would have world sympathy at my back. On the contrary, the odds, almost in every case, have been against me.

But many Americans will feel that a movement for freedom may be unwise at this moment, leading possibly to complications prejudicial to the war effort, is the next objection raised. It is the old

unanswerable criticism about the perils of changing pilots in midstream. Against which there is little to say, save that when the pilot at the helm does not know the hidden reefs and is making for the most dangerous rocks in the creek, it may be better to risk the changeover, and there need be no disaster if sufficient precautions are taken on both sides.

It would be, in my opinion (says Gandhi), the least risk the Allies could take on behalf of the war effort. I AM OPEN TO CONVICTION. If anybody could convince me that in the midst of war the British Government cannot declare India free without jeopardizing the war effort, I should like to hear the argument, I have not as yet heard any cogent one.

"I am open to conviction." Try to force Gandhi to recant, when he is not conscious of having erred—and he will refuse, as would any self-respecting man, white or coloured, with sufficient courage. Convince him of his error, and his intransigence disappears.

If you were convinced, would you call off the campaign?

Of course. My complaint is that all these good critics talk *at* me, swear *at* me, but never



condescend to talk *to* me. (*Harijan*, July 26, 1942.)

What has happened to British statesmanship that no attempt is made to follow up this cue? Why does nobody take the initiative, and open up negotiations at once?

But, men will argue, what about Gandhi's other statement that there was no room left for negotiation? How does one reconcile the two? Perhaps by following his own advice to us not to strain at the meaning of every word, but try to catch the spirit of the utterance. It is to be hoped that even British statesmen do not always mean literally every syllable they say.

Here is the offending statement:

If the British see, however late, the wisdom of recognizing the Independence of India without reference to parties, all things are possible. But the point I want to stress is this, that there is no room left for negotiations on the proposal for withdrawal. Either they recognize Independence or they don't. After that recognition many things can follow. For by that one single act, the British representatives will have altered the face of the whole landscape, and revived the hope of the people

which has been frustrated times without number. Therefore, whenever that great act is performed on behalf of the British people, it will be a red letter day in the history of India and the world. And, as I have said, it can materially affect the fortunes of war. (*Harijan*, July 19, 1942.)

In a further conversation, the door opens a few inches wider. An American reporter asks :

You have said there is no more room for negotiation. Does that mean that you would ignore any conciliatory gesture if it was made ?

So far as we are concerned (answers Gandhi), we have closed our hearts. As we have said in our resolution, all hopes have been dashed to pieces. The burden is shifted. But it is open to America, to Britain, to China and even to Russia to plead for India which is pining for freedom. And if an acceptable proposal is made, it would certainly be open to Congress or any other party to entertain and accept it. It would be churlish on our part if we said, "We don't want to talk to anybody, and we will by our own strong hearts expel the British." (*Harijan*, July 26, 1942.)

No response, except from those whose voices are ineffective, and the disputants in the case remain on opposite sides of the door. There is an ever-increasing fear in the minds of would-be solution-finders. Supposing Britain doesn't want a settlement !

Only last week Mr. Amery reminded us that nothing is going to be done (says a pessimist).

I am very much afraid we shall have to listen to a repetition of that language in stronger terms if possible (replies Gandhi, thoughtfully). But it can't change the will of a group of people who are determined to go their way. (*Harijan*, July 19, 1942.)

In that case, the movement will become necessary.

"If it is misunderstood by the British, and they take up the attitude that they would like to crush it." "Then," says Gandhi, "they would be responsible for the result, not I."

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On all sides there is criticism. Some of it is constructive and welcome. There are many genuine friends of India who find themselves unable to identify themselves with Congress policy,

in spite of their sympathy with Congress aims. There are many genuine friends of Gandhi who by no means always approve of him and his ways. They express their contrary opinions, never hesitating to point out the mistakes which they believe both he and Congress have made. But much of the criticism takes the form of misrepresentation, or virulent attack. Some of it comes as the climax of the growing opposition of extreme Moslems. Gandhi had said of the situation in 1940 (*Harijan*, June 8):

The correspondence in my possession and the Urdu press cuttings and even some English cuttings from journals owned by Muslims go to show that I am believed to be the arch enemy of Islam and Indian Muslims. If I was at one acclaimed as their greatest friend and suffered the praise, I must suffer, too, to be described as an enemy. Truth is known only to God. I am confident that in nothing I am doing, saying, or thinking, I am their enemy. They are blood brothers and will remain so, though they may disown me.... Qaid-e-Azam (Jinnah) himself was a great Congressman. It was only after non-co-operation that he, like many other Congressmen belonging to several communities, left it. Their defection' was

purely political. They disliked direct action. :...Rightly or wrongly, the Congress does not believe in watertight compartments on a communal basis. , If religion is allowed to be, as it is, a personal concern and a matter between God and man, there are many dominating common factors between the two which will compel common life and common action. Religions are not for separating men from one another. They are meant to bind them. It is a misfortune that today they are so distorted that they have become a potent cause of strife and mutual slaughter.

Now, in 1942, he gives a typical answer to Jinnah's venomous personal attacks :

He seems now to be misguided. I pray long life for him and wish that he may survive me. A day will certainly dawn when he will realize that I have never wronged him or the Muslims. I have the fullest confidence in the sincerity of the Muslims.....They have every right to form any opinion of me but I still continue to be the same man of the old days. Muslims may in the heat of the moment forget themselves and abuse me. Islam does not teach to abuse.

•He finds it necessary to issue a warning to

those who seek to distort truth at such a critical moment of India's and the world's history :

The critics who impute motives to the Working Committee or to me harm the cause they profess to serve. The members of the Working Committee are all seasoned servants of the nation with a full sense of responsibility. It is no use damning me as a dictator like Herr Hitler. He does not argue with his co-workers, if he may be said to have any. He merely issues orders which can only be disobeyed on pain of death or worse. I argue with my friends for days. I argued at the last meeting for eight days. The members agreed when their reason was satisfied. My sanction with my friends as well as self-styled enemies has ever been reason and love. It is a travesty of truth therefore to compare me with Hitler or to call me a dictator in any current sense of the term. It is an equal travesty of truth to abuse the Congress by calling it a Hindu or Communal organization. It is national in the fullest sense of the term. It is a purely political organization . . . .the sole representative national organization in India with a mass following. Its gains belong not merely to itself but to the whole nation, irrespective

of caste or creed or race. It is mischievous and misleading to discredit this organization in America and Great Britain as a communal, pro-Axis or purely Hindu organization.. It is not and never has been a secret or violent organization. If it had been either it would have been suppressed long ago.....(*Harijan*, July 26, 1942.)

Gandhi—a dictator ! There are certain words in modern usage which produce an immediate emotional reaction, whether friendly or hostile. "Freedom," "Quisling," "vested interest," "anarchy," "forced labour," "democracy," and many more. They quickly arouse shallow enthusiasms, or antagonisms, and are the stock-in-trade of propagandists. "Dictator" is the red rag of the democratic bull. So Gandhi is a dictator ! There's enough truth in it to make the suggestion worth while. But his is a curious sort of dictatorship which belongs to the spiritual realm. It is from his character that his authority derives. There is no outward show. Never does he need to have recourse to undignified theatricalities or tyrannical thunderings. Yet for millions of people his word is law. Outwardly he is weak and insignificant, this little half-clad figure who travels around India in uncomfortable

third-class railway carriages, sharing the inconveniences that fall to the lot of the ordinary peasant. Where is his special conveyance, special coach, special bodyguard? In trains he sleeps curled up on a hard wooden bench, resting his head on a pillow case full of official-looking documents. At home he lies on a primitive bed out under the stars or on the floor. He is accessible day and night to friends or enemies. How easy to slip in and assassinate him! That he wears no bullet-proof jacket is obvious to the most sceptical.

Sometimes his followers allow themselves to be hypnotized into a state of perpetual obedience. In such cases he tries to break the spell by transferring their attentions from himself to the many jobs of hard work awaiting them, and begging them to implement the ideals for which he works and not waste time in adulation.

When his old and trusted colleague, Raja-gopalachariar, opposed the Quit India resolution, and even resigned from Congress on the issue, what did "dictator" Gandhi do? He praised him for the sincerity of his independent thinking, and severely reprimanded some small-minded people who had made trouble for the "renegade" at a public meeting. "Has Rajaji lost every



title to respect," he writes, "because he has taken what seems to be an unpopular view? Those who did not share his views might have abstained from attending the meeting, but having gone there they should have given him a hearing. They might have cross-questioned him.....Those who threatened a disturbance have disgraced themselves. The calmness, good-humour, presence of mind and determination that Rajaji showed that trying time were worthy of him. These must bring him many admirers, if not even followers.....People follow their heroes. And Rajaji has never lacked the qualities that go to make a hero."

What is his attitude to those members of the All-India Congress Committee who oppose his resolutions?

Those who opposed it deserve my congratulations for their courage of conviction..... It is better to be in a minority provided we stick to truth and determination, I have learnt this lesson long ago. I have now learnt a further lesson from the dissenting members.

Between July 14, date of the passing of the resolution by the Congress Working Committee, and August 8 when it is submitted to the All-India Congress Committee, there is a dangerous

drift towards disaster. The atmosphere grows stifling. Will nobody throw up a window, and let in some good fresh air? What happens to our British sense of humour that it is never there to lighten Indian affairs? Congress and Gandhi may be cutting a ridiculous figure in our eyes, but are we so near to the sublime ourselves as we strut around in all our *démodé* imperialist trappings?

Pandit Nehru can contain himself no longer when the "no compromise," "hold India" speeches are relayed from Whitehall. "Then it's struggle—eternal struggle," he cries. Declaring that India's national self-respect could not be a matter for bargaining, he is driven to add, "I am galled with sorrow and anger to note that I for years wanted some settlement because I felt Britain was in trouble. They had their suffering and sorrow. I wanted my country to move forward step in step with them as a free country, but what is one to make of such statements?"

Then a British voice—that of the Bishop of Calcutta—speaking carefully, sorrowfully, and out of deep experience:

I read with profound regret the utterance of the Secretary of State regarding the political situation. I deplored the resolution of the Congress Working Committee because it de-

parted from the principle of a conference to settle disputes and adopted the threat of coercive action to enforce its views. Is it the method of peace to answer threats of coercion with similar threats ? Among determined men that may lead to war, and the danger arises that two great nations will be engaged in a struggle exceeding in bitterness and agony anything that has gone before.

Is it too late to avert a disaster the consequences of which on the wide conflict at present being waged cannot be but of the gravest character ? Is the meaning of the cross, which we as Christians claim to follow, to be lost upon us, and the way of redemption through sacrifice to be disregarded ? My appeal is to that great body of my fellow-countrymen who, heirs of national freedom themselves, believe that this is the rightful possession of every nation on reaching maturity. Britain through a century and more has been building up a great nation from the diverse elements of India's vast population.

The time has come to place the coping stone upon this noble edifice and surely it should be laid in the cement of human goodwill and friendship. WHEN HONEST DISPUTES ARISE

BETWEEN MEN OF GOODWILL, RECOURSE IS HAD TO ARBITRATION. An independent mind, free from inherited prejudices, is better able to see where a just solution lies. Is such a course impossible for the present crisis? We have sought and found trusted allies with whom to co-operate in the struggle for world freedom which, unaided, we could hardly hope to have achieved. Is it not the path of wisdom to seek similar assistance in a no less grave situation?

Sir Tej Sapru, leader of the Moderates, whose lawyer's mind had no doubt seen the opportunity offered by Gandhi's "CONVINCE ME" appeal, asks for a Round Table Conference, stressing that in his opinion it is no use saying that it will serve no useful purpose, or is not likely to lead to any satisfactory results. The critical situation in the country demands that every effort should be made. He would like to see Mr. Gandhi, as the leader of the biggest party in India, take the initiative of calling the conference and give up the idea of civil disobedience until it has met. Or, if Indians do not respond, Sapru respectfully suggests that it will then be the obvious duty of the Viceroy or of the Indian members of the Executive Council to do so. He wishes that Mr. Amery

had made the suggestion in the House of Commons speech when he held out certain threats to Congress.

While Jayakar (Moderate) asserts that "The mistake of His Majesty's Government and the Indian Government in wrongly gauging Indian sentiment with regard to the war, and not bestirring themselves in time to meet it has caused the deepest indignation and discontent in the country.

But nothing is done. Does Britain not want a settlement? Have these "agitators" become such a thorn in the flesh that it seems better to let them dig their own grave? Are officials really happy to stand aside and watch some of the best men of India pursue a mistaken policy that must in the end lead to their repression without offering friendly advice and exploring opportunities of a settlement—if not for their sakes, for the sake of the country?

Rajagopalachariar makes a last-minute appeal. He urges the establishment of a national government, an interim popular government.

If Britain does not wish the Axis to make further progress in the East she should make up her mind and put India under a proper government. I am sure the statesmen of

Britain have knowledge of the present feeling of the people of India and also of the peril inherent in the situation. They have imagination and experience enough to see whom the people would trust and whom they would not. What we want is a government which will be acclaimed by the people of India as their own government.

The British statesmen can do this only if they are resolved not to feel ashamed to do the right thing. I believe it is the only way to defend and save India from disaster. The war can be won and India saved from disaster not by argument and legalities or by self-deception, but only by timely recognition of the realities and swift action in accordance with that recognition.

Rajagopalachariar is himself an able lawyer, and the ex-Prime Minister of Madras.

Mr. Fazlul Huq, Moslem Premier of Bengal, in a statement on behalf of the Bengal Council of Ministers, says :

The fact that Gandhi is to address an appeal to the Viceroy gives a ray of hope, the value of which I do not wish to minimize.

Our duty should be to do everything that is

possible to avert a crisis and not hasten it.

Let all parties meet together and decide on the terms of an interim settlement.

He believes that an agreement is possible.

But the drift continues.

On August 8, the All-India Congress Committee discusses, approves and endorses the Resolution of July 14, after giving to it most careful consideration, and is of the opinion that subsequent events have given it further justification. In its own resolution, which incorporates in slightly different wording that of July 14, occur the following passages :

India, classic land of modern Imperialism, has become the crux of the question, for by freedom in India will Britain and the United Nations be judged and the peoples of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm.

The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy.

A Free India will assure this success by throwing all her great resources into the struggle for Freedom against the Aggression of Nazism, Fascism, and Imperialism.

On the declaration of India's independence, a Provisional Government will be formed..... it will be a composite government representative of all the important sections of people in India. Its primary functions must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command, together with its allied Powers, and to promote the well-being and progress of workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere to whom essentially all power and authority must belong.

Independent India wishes her freedom to be the symbol of and prelude to the freedom of all other Asiatic Nations under foreign domination, and would gladly join a Federation and co-operate freely on an equal basis with other countries in the solution of international problems.

The earnest appeal by the Working Committee to Great Britain and the United Nations has so far met with no response, and criticisms made in many foreign quarters show ignorance of India's and the world's needs, and sometimes even hostility to India's freedom which is significant of the mentality of domination and racial superiority which cannot be tolerated



by a proud people conscious of their strength and of the justice of their cause. The All-India Congress Committee would yet again at this last moment renew this appeal to Britain and the 'United Nations. But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against the Imperialist and Authoritarian government that dominates it, and prevents it from functioning in its own interests and in the interests of humanity.

The Committee therefore resolves to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale so that the country may utilize all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle.

Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhi and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and hardships that fall to their lot with courage and endurance, hold

together under the leadership of Gandhi and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom.

They must remember that non-violence is the basis of the movement. The time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress Committee can function.

When this happens every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued.

Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide in urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place, and which ultimately leads to the independence and deliverance of India.

Lastly, while the All-India Congress Committee has stated its own view of the future governance under a free India, it wishes to make it quite clear to all concerned that by embarking on a mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for Congress. Power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India.

Pandit Nehru, in moving the resolution, had said :

It is not a narrow nationalist resolution. I am proud of Indian nationalism because it is broad-based and has an international outlook.....

If by demanding our freedom we are called blackmailers, then surely our understanding of the English language has been wrong.

In accepting the responsibility of leadership in this struggle, Gandhi tells his people :

I take up my task of leading you not as your commander, not as your controller, but as the humblest servant of you all ; and he who serves best becomes the chief among them. I am the chief servant of the nation : that is how I look at it.

Then, referring to the deep friendship he had cherished for the late C. F. Andrews :

At the present moment the spirit of Andrews is sweeping me, and Andrews seems to me to be the highest that I have known in the English. With Andrews I enjoyed a relationship closer than I have enjoyed with any Indian. There was no secret between us.

The button is pressed, and the machinery of Government released, that machinery of which

Tagore had said, "The mechanics who drive it have a long training in power, but no tradition of human sympathy, which is superfluous in a workshop. They are incapable of understanding the living India, owing to the natural mentality of bureaucracy which simplifies its task and manages an alien race from a distance through various switches and handles and wheels, and hardly ever through human touch." At all cost law and order, too often a euphemism in India for the rule of force, must be preserved. Action is swift. Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, together with hundreds of others, are imprisoned under special ordinances, political prisoners detained without trial. For Nehru it is the ninth time. During the sixth he had written :

The years I have spent in prison ! Sitting alone, wrapped in my thoughts, how many seasons I have seen go by, following each other into oblivion. How many moons I have watched wax and wane, and the pageant of the stars moving along inexorably and majestically ! How many yesterdays of my youth lie buried there ; and sometimes I see the ghosts of these dead yesterdays rise up, bringing poignant memories, and whispering to me : "Was it worth it ?" There is no hesitation

about the answer. If I were given the chance to go through my life again, with my present knowledge and experience added, I would no doubt try to make many changes in my personal life. I would endeavour to improve in many ways on what I had previously done, but my major decisions in public affairs would remain untouched. Indeed, I could not vary them, for they were stronger than myself, and a force beyond my control drove me to them.....I have a feeling that a chapter of my life is over and another chapter will begin. What this is going to be I cannot clearly guess. The leaves of the book of life are closed.\*

That was nearly ten years ago.

There is a swift warning from Rajagopalachariar :

A solution should not be given up as impossible.....Gandhi believed there was ample opportunity for an exchange of ideas with the Viceroy before starting his campaign.

But the Government's precipitate action prevented negotiation and adjustments and

\* *Autobiography* : Jawaharlal Nehru.

created a most unfortunate and dangerous situation.

In spite of this I believe that a calm examination by British statesmen of the Congress position would not be impossible or useless.

The situation calls for every human effort towards solution.

But there is no response to his appeal. Meanwhile India presents a sorry spectacle. Gandhi has not launched his civil disobedience movement, but the people take matters into their own hands. With the responsible leaders of Congress in jail, others, less responsible, take the reins, and the situation offers every opportunity to enemies of Congress to make trouble in their name. Many factors must have contributed to the violent disorders that break out all over the country. According to an official statement, there are signs of a genuine non-violent movement in the background—a faithful attempt to be true to the imprisoned chief. But there are all too many scenes of violence. The reaction of angry mobs to the treatment meted out to the leaders they loved; the letting loose of the hatred and resentment which Gandhi's restraining influence had held in check; the effects of Japanese anti-British propa-

ganda which had been inflaming sections of India for several years; the broadcasts of Subhas Bose (Indian Cambridge graduate who had thrown up the opportunity of a lucrative job in the Indian Civil Service to join in the struggle for freedom; one-time Congressman who could not tolerate either the non-violent discipline of Congress or the frustration of life under the Paramount Power and had joined the Axis at Berlin); and maybe our own instructions in sabotage broadcast to the occupied countries of Europe. Whatever the causes, the effects are all too definite. Every act of violence, gratuitous or provoked, is repaid many-fold by organized repression on a wide scale—machine-gunning of crowds from the air, firing by troops and police on unarmed masses, whippings, lathi charges, collective fines, use of tear gas. Many of the demonstrators are young students, some girls, the counterpart of all those young students who have suffered similarly on previous occasions and have sometimes sought retaliation by terrorism. Soon “the situation is well in hand.” Peace is restored, but “an arid peace, the bitter fruit of repression that gives rest to neither conqueror nor conquered.” The revolt is driven underground, and the months pass.

Anxious months for both countries. Un-

tiring attempts at reconciliation made by responsible Indians who, though not in sympathy with Congress methods, share, together with the rest of India, the desire for Freedom now. Extremists continue to make use of the opportunity to libel their imprisoned enemies, and are given considerable publicity in Britain. All attempts at solution by progressive thinkers in both countries are stonewalled, concrete proposals put forward are ignored, while a bewildered British public, fed with propaganda on both sides, is unable to grasp the truth of the situation. Lulled by reports of the situation being well in hand, and feeling that the main task is to get on with the war, ordinary men and women delude themselves into believing that the deadlock in India is of little consequence. When Britain's allies show signs of uneasiness, they are warned that this is a domestic affair, and that in any case they don't understand. Which is probably partly true, and criticism without knowledge may be very dangerous. But at least some of that criticism is well-informed and worthy of attention.

Meanwhile, what is happening in the mind of the man who originally suggested that British power should be withdrawn? Gandhi, the Hindu, has been detained in the palace of the Aga



Khan, head of the Indian Moslem world. It is a luxurious home, ill-suited to the ascetic tastes of the prisoner. But nobody knows what he is thinking, how he is reacting to the happenings outside, or whether he knows anything about them.

The first news of him shocks the world. He has decided to fast ! If Gandhi has been the despair of his foes, he has certainly been equally the despair of his friends. As if the situation was not complicated enough already ! This will further antagonize those who had grown tired of his enigmatic ways. Telephones ring. Angry voices offer a great deal of gratuitous misinformation, and demand an explanation of this last step. It is difficult to keep calm in this tornado. It is safe perhaps to counter the savage criticism with one quiet question, "Why is he fasting ?" "To get his own way, of course. He wants to be released." "Are you sure ?" "Of course; it's in the paper !" A reliable criterion of judgment. "Anyhow, the Viceroy says it's 'political blackmail,' and he should know, for he is on the spot." A pathetic faith in the "man on the spot." How should he necessarily know the causes and motives of such an essentially Eastern, particularly Hindu, experience as fasting ? All an overburdened Viceroy can be expected to do is to try to diagnose

the situation, and if he projects on to the Eastern patient motives that might have been his own, as a Westerner, in a similar situation, he can hardly be blamed. But that does not make him right.

When discussing Gandhi's fasts, Field-Marshal Smuts once said :

The performer (if I may call him so) tries to rouse the community to face the situation by the thought and spectacle of his own suffering. The technique is based on the principle of suffering and the purifying effect of vicarious suffering on the emotions of others. It has the same purifying and ennobling effect which high tragedy has in accordance with the Aristotelean definition.

We touch here not only the Greek notion of tragedy but the deepest springs of religion. In particular the motif of suffering is central to the Christian religion. The Cross remains the symbol of the most significant tragedy in all human history. The suffering servant of Isaiah and the Great Sufferer on the Cross, pouring out His soul for His brothers, stirs emotions whose dynamic is incomparably greater than that of all reason or rational persuasion. The argument from suffering

is, and remains the most effective in the world. In the welter of religions in the early Roman empire the Christian religion won through by suffering, by martyrdom, and not by the arguments of the Apologists ; nor was its progress impeded by the current philosophies of that enlightened age. And in the same way the large-scale sufferings which in our day a cruel and brutal inhumanity in Europe is inflicting on those who differ in race or religion or conviction may yet become the dynamite to explode the great systems now so proudly being reared.\*

It is hard for Westerners to understand, particularly if those Westerners are not spiritually sensitive in any case. Moreover, in the case of Gandhi fasts, there is always in addition to the deeper general significance of fasting, a particular significance which special circumstances have created. Each fast, in fact, must be considered separately, for each is an entity. Simpler to bundle them all together and label them as "a form of blackmail with the object of getting his own way." But it will not help the situation.

Speaking about the fast to a gathering in Bir-

\*Mahatma Gandhi : *Essays and Reflections*.

mingham Cathedral, the Bishop used these words :

Unfortunately, as regards all but a few, it remains true that "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." For this reason there has been profound misunderstanding of Mahatma Gandhi's fast. . . . I myself cannot believe that the fast was of the nature of blackmail. It may seem so to many among us because they do not understand Mr. Gandhi's religious outlook. Though the doctrine of atonement lies deeply imbedded in Christianity, though we express belief in the efficacy of prayer and fasting and in the spiritual power of suffering, our trust in force is so complete and our outlook so materialistic, that Christian essentials, profoundly real to Mr. Gandhi, may mean little to some among us. A Christian theologian may stress "the redemptive power of innocent suffering," but, when our politicians see it used with simple trust, they cannot understand it; they suspect madness or profound duplicity.

We need to remember that Christianity came from the East, and that instinctively Mr. Gandhi appreciates certain of its fundamentals better than any European. Let us never forget that, while we can show to India the Nordic virtues

inherent in Christianity, India can in return give to us a deeper understanding of the mystical content of our faith.

But of far greater importance to us than the rights and wrongs of the fast should be the reasons that gave rise to it.

During the six months following the incarceration of Gandhi and the leaders, and thousands more, under special ordinances and without trial, many statements are made in justification of government action, but from the prisoners there is a necessary and ominous silence. Not until February, when the fast is about to be undertaken, is news released of the events leading up to it. This takes the form of letters written by Gandhi to the Viceroy and the Viceroy to Gandhi, and for those who have patience to make their way through the somewhat wordy and meandering prose the results are illuminating. The first letter is from Gandhi, dated August 14, six days after his imprisonment. The Government had produced a resolution in which it exonerated itself from all guilt concerning the outbreak of disturbances in India, and laid the blame on Gandhi and the Congress. Gandhi refuses the charge :

The Government of India were wrong in

precipitating the crisis. The Government resolution justifying this step is full of distortions and misrepresentations. That you have the approval of your Indian "colleagues" can have no significance except this: that in India you can always command such services.

He declared that the Government should have waited. He had publicly stated that he was sending a letter to the Viceroy, and this letter would have been an appeal for an impartial examination of the Congress case. The Government's precipitate action, he says, suggests that they were afraid of the extreme caution with which Congress was moving; afraid that it might gain WORLD SYMPATHY. Whereas they should have taken advantage of the interval foreshadowed and explored every possibility of meeting the Congress demand. He adheres to the legitimacy of the demand. He refuses to accept the Government contention that the Congress had made preparation for unlawful and, in some cases, violent activities. This is, he says, "a gross distortion of the reality," for "violence was never contemplated at any stage." If the Government really did hear of such preparations, they should have brought to book the parties concerned, whereas by their "unsupported allegations in the resolution they have laid themselves open to the

charge of unfair dealing." (Gandhi, also, is a lawyer.) Replying to the statement that the Congress seeks to secure its own dominance, he says :

The Government of India have not condescended to consider the Congress offer that if simultaneously with the declaration of the Independence of India they could not trust the Congress to form a stable provisional government they should ask the Muslim League to do so, and that any national government formed by the League would be loyally accepted by the Congress. Such an offer is hardly consistent with the charge of totalitarianism against the Congress.

He adheres to his contention that there can be no real unity in India until British power is withdrawn, and contends that the "living burial" of the author of the demand "has not resolved the deadlock, it has aggravated it." Once more he pleads for the shedding of imperialism "as much for the sake of the British people and humanity as for India," and asserts that Congress has no interests of its own apart from that of the whole of India and the world. He tries to make clear that the Government of India and the Congress have really a declared cause in common—the pro-

tection of the freedom of China and Russia :

The Government of India think that the freedom of India is not necessary for winning the cause. I think exactly the opposite.

Jawaharlal Nehru, he continues, feels deeply the misery of China and Russia, and dreads the success of Fascism and Nazism, so much so that he had been trying to forget his quarrel with Imperialism, and had fought against Gandhi's position "with a passion which I have no words to describe." They had argued for days together until the logic of facts overwhelmed him and he saw clearly that without the freedom of India that of the other two countries was in jeopardy. This example is cited presumably to indicate that even Gandhi and the Government might have come to an understanding by patient discussion of the whole situation, and leads to the remark :

Surely you are wrong in having imprisoned a powerful friend and ally.....

However much I dislike your action, I remain the same friend you have known me. I still plead for reconsideration of the Government of India's whole policy. Do not disregard the pleading of one who claims to be a sincere friend of the British people. Heav-



en guide you !

The reply is a few lines of acknowledgment, and a refusal to accept the criticisms or the request that the policy be changed.

A month later, Gandhi tries again, with a letter to the Indian Government. After stating that there need have been no calamity had the Viceroy awaited his letter, and claiming that Congress policy still remains unequivocally non-violent, he urges them to "release the leaders, withdraw all repressive measures, and explore ways and means of reconciliation." He explains that he feels it is his duty to let the Government know that this is his reaction to the sad happenings in the country. He receives a formal acknowledgment.

On December 31, he once more takes the initiative, with a personal letter to the Viceroy. He begins by blaming himself for having allowed the sun to set so many times on the quarrel. He wishes to disburden himself of all that is rankling before a new year begins. He realizes now that Lord Linlithgow suspects his *bona fides*, and regrets that before taking drastic action he did not send for him, tell him of his suspicions and verify the facts. He is troubled at being asked to

condemn the so-called violence of some people

reputed to be Congressmen, although I have no data for such condemnation save the heavily censored reports of newspapers. I must own that I thoroughly distrust those reports. Gandhi's sense of justice is very strong, and he has a trained lawyer's mind.

He has been placed, he says, in a palace "where every reasonable creature comfort is assured." He has freely partaken of those comforts "as a duty," never as "a pleasure," IN THE HOPE THAT SOME DAY THOSE THAT HAVE THE POWER WILL REALIZE THAT THEY HAVE WRONGED INNOCENT MEN. He has conceived it to be his mission to try to spread truth and non-violence among mankind in the place of violence and falsehood. The law of Satyagraha (Non-violence) as he knows it, provides a remedy in such moments of trial as he is passing through. It is "to crucify the flesh by fasting." "THAT SAME LAW FORBIDS ITS USE EXCEPT AS A LAST RESORT. I DO NOT WANT TO USE IT IF I CAN AVOID IT. THIS IS THE WAY TO AVOID IT, CONVINCE ME OF MY ERROR OR ERRORS AND I SHALL MAKE AMPLE AMENDS. You can send for me or send someone who knows your mind and can carry conviction. There are many other ways if you have the will. May I expect an early reply? May the new year bring peace to us all."

Two weeks later, the Viceroy writes appreciatively of the frankness of the letter, but, apparently misunderstanding the main gist of it, imagines that Gandhi is wishing to retrace his steps, dissociate himself from his former policy. He asks what positive suggestion he wishes to make. He also reaffirms the responsibility of Gandhi and Congress for the violence in India.

Replying within twenty-four hours, Gandhi writes again :

My letter of the 31st was a growl against you. Yours is a counter-growl. It means that you maintain that you were right in arresting me.

The inference you draw from my letter is, I am afraid, not correct. I have re-read my letter in the light of your interpretation but have failed to find your meaning in it. I wanted to fast, and should still want to if nothing comes out of our correspondence and I have to be a helpless witness of what is going on in the country, including the privations of millions, owing to the universal scarcity stalking the land.....

You want me to make a positive suggestion. This I might be able to do only if you

PUT ME AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE OF THE CONGRESS.

IF I COULD BE CONVINCED OF MY ERROR OR WORSE, of which you are evidently, I SHOULD NEED TO CONSULT NOBODY, so far as my own action is concerned, to MAKE A FULL AND OPEN CONFESSION AND MAKE AMPLE AMENDS. BUT

I HAVE NOT ANY CONVICTION OF ERROR. While making it clear that he deplors the violence, he again stresses that he is not able to express an opinion on events which he cannot influence and of which he has but a one-sided account :

You are bound *prima facie* to accept the accuracy of reports that may be placed before you by your departmental heads. But you will not expect me to do so. Such reports have before now often proved fallible.....You will perhaps appreciate my fundamental difficulty in making the statement you have expected me to make.

This however I can say from the housetop, that I am as confirmed a believer in non-violence as I have ever been. You may not know that any violence on the part of Congress workers I have condemned openly and unequivocally. I have even done public penance more than once.

I must not weary you with examples. THE POINT I WISH TO MAKE IS THAT ON EVERY SUCH OCCASION I WAS A FREE MAN.

Once more he expresses his regret that the Viceroy had not granted him an interview before taking action, and points out there have been former occasions when the Government of India have owned their mistakes, and this in spite of great and previous mob violence.

To sum up : (1) If you want me to act singly, convince me that I was wrong and I will make ample amends.

(2) If you want me to make any proposal on behalf of Congress you should put me among the Congress Working Committee members.

I DO PLEAD WITH YOU TO MAKE UP YOUR MIND TO END THE IMPASSE.

In his reply, the Viceroy states that he is still rather in the dark, although he has read the last letter with care and attention. He still insists

that Gandhi and Congress are responsible for a campaign of violence and crime, but produces no proof. He is glad to hear the unequivocal condemnation of violence, but refuses to accept the Government's responsibility for it. Ignoring Gandhi's request to be put among his colleagues, or convinced of his own personal error, the Viceroy once more expresses his readiness to consider specific proposals if Gandhi will repudiate the Congress resolution and dissociate himself from it, and give appropriate assurances as regards the future.

The correspondence drags on. Obviously the two men do not understand each other and at times they seem to be talking a different language. There is little likelihood of any satisfactory result unless they face each other and in conversation clarify issues as each argues his case. Both are doubtless tired men, passing through a great ordeal. Both appear to be honest thinkers, but with such different types of mind that a point of contact is never established. If only there were a well-balanced "go-between" with an understanding of each, to explain each to the other.

In a letter dated January 29, there is a further appeal from Gandhi to be convinced of the responsibility of Congress for the violence that

broke out "after the wholesale arrest of the principal Congress workers" :

Then take the unproved and in my opinion unprovable charges hurled against the Congress and me by so responsible a Minister as the Secretary of State for India.

Surely I can say with suavity that it is for the Government to justify their action by solid evidence, not by *ipse dixit*.

But you throw in my face the fact of murders by persons reputed to be Congressmen, I see the facts of murders as clearly as I hope you do. My answer is that the Government goaded people to the point of madness.....

Add to this tale of woe the privations of the poor millions due to India-wide scarcity which I cannot help thinking might have been largely mitigated if not altogether prevented, had there been a *bona fide* national government responsible to a popularly elected Assembly.

The situation demands that he should now undertake a fast according to capacity, to begin on February 9 and end on March 22. "MY WISH IS NOT TO FAST UNTO DEATH, BUT TO SURVIVE THE ORDEAL OF THE FEAT IF GOD SO WILLS IT. THIS FAST CAN BE ENDED SOONER BY GOVERNMENT

GIVING THE NEEDED RELIEF."

The Viceroy replies with a letter in which he once more reiterates the charges against Gandhi and Congress, produces no proof, but makes the grave statement that the Government has evidence that Gandhi was prepared to condone violence, and that the violence that ensued was part of a concerted plan, conceived long before the arrest of the Congress leaders. "You may rest assured," the letter continues, "that the charges against Congress will have to be met sooner or later, and it will then be for you and your colleagues to clear yourselves before the world if you can." Then comes a warning: "If in the meantime you yourself, by any action such as you now appear to be contemplating, attempt to find an easy way out, the judgment will go against you by default." Followed by the explanation that he regards "the use of a fast for political purposes as a form of political blackmail for which there can be no moral justification," and had understood from Gandhi's own previous writings that this was also his view.

With these remarks, the misunderstanding is well-nigh complete. In his next and last letter, Gandhi takes up the last point first:

No doubt the responsibility for the step, and its consequence will be solely mine.



You have allowed an expression to slip from your pen for which I was unprepared..... "to find an easy way out." That you, as a friend, can impute such a base and cowardly motive to me passes comprehension. You have also described it as a form of political blackmail. And you quote my previous writings on the subject against me. We might abide by my writings. I hold that there is nothing inconsistent in them with the contemplated step. I wonder whether you have yourself read those writings.....

You say that there is evidence that I "expected this policy to lead to violence," and that I was "prepared to condone it"....I have seen no evidence in support of such a serious charge.....The speech of the Home Member, of which you have favoured me with a copy, may be taken as the opening speech of prosecuting counsel and nothing more. It contains unsupported imputations against Congressmen. Of course he has described the violent outbursts in graphic language. But he has not said why it took place when it did. YOU HAVE CONDEMNED MEN AND WOMEN BEFORE TRYING THEM AND HEARING THEIR DEFENCE. Surely there is nothing wrong

in my asking you to show me the evidence on which you hold them guilty. What you say in your letter carries no conviction. Proof should correspond to the canons of English jurisprudence.....

You say that the time is not yet ripe to publish the charges against the Congress. Have you ever thought of the possibility of their being found guiltless when they are put before an impartial tribunal? or some of the condemned persons might have died in the meantime or that some of the evidence the living can produce might become available?....

You have left me no loophole for escape from the ordeal I have set before myself. I begin it on the 9th instant with the clearest possible conscience. Despite your description of it as a "form of political blackmail" it is on my part meant to be AN APPEAL TO THE HIGHEST TRIBUNAL FOR THE JUSTICE WHICH I HAVE FAILED TO SECURE FROM YOU. If I do not survive the ordeal, I shall go to the judgment seat with the fullest faith in my innocence. Posterity will judge between you as the representative of an all powerful Government and me as a humble man who has tried to serve his country

and humanity through it.

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Three weary weeks of strain while Gandhi pleads with his life for the justice he had failed to secure, undergoing in his own being not only physical suffering but a spiritual self-purification which he alone can understand. India waits and watches. Men of all classes, races and creeds in India and elsewhere are at prayer. The world at large cannot be expected to understand, and there are plenty of scoffers, plenty who wish him dead. But others realize what repercussions may follow the death of this man who means so much to so many, and wields such great influence in the affairs of men.

Though he passes through a time of extreme weakness, Gandhi does not die. He had not expected that he would, but those who were anxiously watching from so many corners of the world had almost lost faith that he could survive. What has the fast achieved? It is a question which no man is qualified to answer.

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The following statement issued by Rajagopalachariar on March 8, 1943, is worthy of attention :

Ever since the Gandhi-Linlithgow correspondence was published on February 10, one outstanding fact that has transpired in that correspondence has given cause for much puzzlement. No explanation has yet been rendered by the official world. Gandhiji's disapproval of the acts of sabotage and violence that followed his arrest was explicitly expressed in his letter to the Government of India dated 23rd September, 1942. Had this letter or the substance of it been published at the time it would have effectively stopped the exploitation of his name as well as of the Congress by those who carried on and encouraged these acts. The suppression of this letter gives rise to the feeling that once the situation was thought by the Government to be in hand, they preferred repression to being under any obligation to Gandhiji. The battle between sabotage and repression was permitted to go on, so to say in complete darkness as to Gandhiji's views. Those who felt that secret organization and destruction of public property could not possibly have been advised by Gandhiji and who deplored the progress of repression have a right to complain that Gandhiji's letter to the Government of India

in September last should not have been suppressed.

The Viceroy when he saw me in November, deplored the absence of any condemnation of these happenings on Gandhiji's part though he has newspapers. On November 12, after my request was refused by the Viceroy, I said to the Press at New Delhi, "If I had thought that there was the slightest chance of the present disturbances being encouraged by the fact of my visit I would not have thought of asking for permission for the visit. My views are so clear and so well known that I hoped that even the fact of my visit would discourage the disturbances and automatically switch the mind of the people engaged in the disturbances to the results of my talks, and it is, therefore, in my opinion, most unfortunate that the Viceroy has decided to refuse the chance of a settlement." The next day, in another statement I said to the Press that "it was unfair to expect Gandhiji from inside prison to express an opinion on what is happening without being asked by anyone, and that it was one of the things I had intended to elicit from Gandhiji if I had been permitted to see him." Little did I know when I made

these statements on November 12 and 13 that the Viceroy had this letter of September 23 from Gandhiji in his hands all the time. Even if the Viceroy had grounds to be dissatisfied with the letter on account of its other contents and deficiencies, if he had told me something about the letter, many innocent people could have been saved from much suffering.

When I saw Gandhiji during his fast on the 26th February and following days, I had opportunities to discuss these questions of sabotage and violence with him. His disapproval was complete and he said that no one was justified in conducting or encouraging such activities in his name or in the name of the Congress. He shared my grief that his letters to the Viceroy and the Government of India on the subject had not been published at once and were suppressed for such a long time.

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The deadlock continues. Fair-minded people in both countries are troubled. The immediate problems of Indian Independence, National Government, relation to the war, and all other complications are beginning to be clouded by a still bigger

issue. Something seems to be happening to British justice. It is not a pleasant experience in the midst of war to feel the foundations of one's own country rocking, to know that something is being tampered with for which our forefathers have struggled and sacrificed and have left to us as a precious heritage. Will Britain stand the test? Will she discover in time that whatever case she may have had before, she has by recent actions put herself in the wrong?

WAIT—says Whitehall. Wait for the WHITE PAPER.

But this lamentable document when it comes proves nothing. It is merely the case for the prosecution. Gandhi's writings, torn out of their context, and obviously misunderstood, are produced as evidence of his evil designs. A genius for over-simplification has quickly obliterated the inner meaning of some of the most abstruse paragraphs which careful students of Gandhian thought and philosophy would not claim to understand. Documents of doubtful validity are cited in condemnation of Congress activities. A public charge is made against men and women—many of whom have proved themselves able administrators in the past and people of the highest moral calibre—who are now in prison or detention camp. They

are denied any opportunity of defending themselves. Public security in a war situation may have necessitated their incarceration *pendente lite*—for India, too, has her 18B. But to make a public charge on unproved evidence, refuse to let the matter be brought before an independent tribunal, constitute oneself accuser, evidence-producer and judge—all in one !—is this necessary, is it wise, is it just ?

So the emphasis has shifted ; from the problem of India to the defence of British justice. No longer is the chief problem the assessment of guilt, but the method by which it is to be assessed. It is easy to make accusations on one side or the other, but must not the defence always be heard before the accusation can stand ? Why for instance dare Britain assert with such assurance that the demand for Independence was timed to strike her when at her weakest ? Surely there had been weaker moments —Dunkirk, for instance ! Where is the proof of the serious charge that Gandhi and Congress are pro-Japanese ? Moreover, how can Congress be dismissed as a “totalitarian party” without careful examination of its inner workings—at least as democratic, in some people’s opinion, as those of political parties in the so-called democracies ; and without examination, also, of its real



aims, as distinct from those attributed to it by its detractors ? Where is the authenticated, documented evidence in support of the contention that Congress leaders initiated the conflict, and planned acts of sabotage—so vehemently denied by Gandhi in his correspondence with the Viceroy ? Congress may or may not have done—for either or both of the contentions may be right or wrong. But by British law men are innocent until their guilt is proved. When justice goes, what next ?

“The charges against the Congress will have to be met sooner or later,” the Viceroy had said. Yes, but by both sides. War blinds us, and we find no time to sit and think rationally about the situation. Supposing, as Gandhi has said, these condemned men and women are proved guiltless when brought before an impartial tribunal ? Supposing some of them have died before then, undefended, but convicted ? They have already—among them Mahadev Desai, Gandhi’s Brahman secretary, right-hand man, and trusted friend. Men loved him for his gentle ways, his great-heartedness, his humble spirit and sensitive soul. They loved him for his intellect and his joy in poetry and the literature of many peoples ; and for that sense of fun which caused him, the humblest of

men, to pull himself erect and announce to East End enquirers, "I am Mahadev. Maha (great) Dev (god). Yes, I am the great god !" Both Britain and India have lost a friend in him.

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All attempts to use the opportunity offered by Gandhi's request to be either convinced of personal error or placed among the Working Committee with a view to putting forward a concrete proposal are frustrated. Even Roosevelt's personal envoy is denied permission to see him before leaving for America. Many resolutions are passed in India and Britain, while suggestions are made in both countries which, though doubtless imperfect, might have opened the way to negotiation. But the door is bolted and barred. "No callers." India's children, 73-year-old Gandhi among them, must be kept under strict parental—foster-parental—control.

Like a bolt from the blue comes the pronouncement of Sir Maurice Gwyer, retiring Lord Chief Justice of India, that the ordinances under which Gandhi and the Congress leaders are imprisoned are illegal. British people who have been growing concerned about the apparent crumbling away of British justice, rejoice that it is one of their

own countrymen who has voiced this truth.

What will Britain do now? If she is truly seeking a way out of the deadlock, here is one at hand. By her own laws she is proved guilty of miscarriage of justice. A dignified apology for those nine months of illegal imprisonment could clear the atmosphere and open a new era. It is the moment for imaginative statesmanship.

But by hasty legislation the ordinances are made valid. After all, it was only a small technical error that had to be put right. A slight adjustment, and the wheels of the great administrative machine begin to revolve again.

The deadlock continues. India, says Sir Tej Sapru, "is a land of protests, processions and prayers."

There is a sudden alarm. Gandhi again! He has dared to accept a challenge from Mr. Jinnah that he should write a letter to him. What kind of letter has he written? Apparently a completely innocuous one expressing his willingness to meet the Moslem leader, doubtless with a view to exploring possibilities of reaching that Hindu-Moslem agreement which the Paramount Power finds requisite to the granting of Independence. But the machinery is ready. "Wisely and bravely"—according to a report in an English provincial paper—

the Government of India refuses to let the letter through. One can almost catch the click of military heels and the flash of bayonets as Gandhi's skinny hand pushes the letter openly through the bars of his metaphorical cage, and the imperial postman refuses delivery. Jinnah not unnaturally enjoys the snub administered to his old enemy, as well as his own filtrations with authority. As to the letter—well, it wasn't the one he wanted anyhow, and Gandhi must have had evil designs in writing such an innocuous epistle. Our one-track policy brings us perilously near to Gilbert and Sullivan opera. Has war extinguished our sense of humour?

Meanwhile, British women are not silent. Undeterred by a pronouncement from Westminster that their intuitive sympathy and understanding disqualify them from diplomatic service, some have tried to bring these very qualities to bear on the Indian problem—to them essentially a psychological problem which will defy solution until the right atmosphere is created. Though knowledge, logic and common sense must play their part, there must be a judicious admixture of imagination. Domination will not do as a substitute. Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence offers refreshing comments :

India is not the enemy. On the contrary, she is potentially a very influential member of the Allied Nations. It should surely be the aim of statesmanship to make this potential situation an actual one—an aim that can only be achieved on the basis of negotiation between equals.

I know that the Indian leaders, Mr. Gandhi in particular, have been reproached for being unduly influenced by the menace of Japan when they rejected the British offer of Independence after the war. But after all, France felt obliged to put the safety of her population before her commitment to the Allies and we have not withdrawn our sympathy from France on that account. The future of Asia depends on the whole-hearted partnership of India with the Allied Nations, in the preservation of the continent from the militarism and aggression of Japan. Statesmanship could achieve it. The marvellous gifts of imagination and vision of our Prime Minister could achieve it. But the attitude of the bewildered old "Nannie" whose nursery discipline has been upset will achieve nothing. Nannie's day is over. (*Manchester Guardian*, June 2, 1943.)

Once more Sir Tej Sapru makes his appeal, urging the appointment of an impartial tribunal to investigate the charges made against Congress, or their release so as to enable the situation to be reviewed in a fresh attempt to solve the deadlock. Speaking on behalf of himself and some of his colleagues, he declares :

We wish to state beyond all doubt that we seek no concessions for Gandhi and his chief associates. We are not petitioners on their behalf for clemency or tenderness. OUR DEMAND IS FOR JUSTICE AND NO MORE AND NO LESS. Grave charges have been made against Gandhi and his colleagues, and it has been suggested both in England and India that the Congress leaders are pro-Japanese. To the best of our knowledge and belief there is no truth in this allegation. Gandhi's pacifism, known all over the world, should not in our opinion be interpreted as amounting to sympathy with Japan or any Axis powers. If the Government for any reason is not prepared to set up an impartial tribunal, then justice no less than expediency demands that Gandhi and his colleagues be set at liberty so that they may apply themselves as free men to review the situation and reach a solution

of the present deadlock in consultation and co-operation with other important parties. (*Reuter*, May 23, 1943.)

"The Government of India have no intention of staging a trial of Mr. Gandhi and the Congress leaders," is the reply of the Secretary of State.

The Prime Minister is the recipient of an Appeal signed by some seventy leading and representative women of Britain :

We the undersigned believe we are expressing the desire of many people in this country, in India, and other parts of the world in wanting to see the deadlock between Great Britain and India ended now.

We are aware of the complexities of the problem, set as it is in the midst of a world war, of the many efforts that have been made on both sides to end the impasse. But we cannot believe that these difficulties are beyond the reach of human remedy. In all great struggles the method of consultation and negotiation finally has to take the place of strife. We want to see this method employed without further delay.

We therefore urge His Majesty's Government not to allow the present position to

continue. As a first step towards ending the deadlock we ask that facilities be granted to the moderate Indian leaders for the consultation they desire with interned leaders. (*Manchester Guardian*, June 4, 1943.)

People are growing tired of the Indian deadlock. Official speeches jangle the nerves with tunes as monotonous as the repertoire of a street barrel-organ. Will the eternal wrangle never cease? Always the sins of the past clouding all vision for the future, and Britain herself losing her own moral freedom as she forges stronger and stronger fetters of sterile rationalization and hardening prejudice. The Prime Minister himself once said (though not on the subject of India), "If we wrangle about yesterday, we have lost tomorrow." Yet we wrangle on, demanding unconditional surrender from those who have defied us, asking one of the greatest men of our age to recant, to confess sins he does not believe he has committed before we will even negotiate with him. Whither Britain?

It is not yet too late to strike out on a more glorious path. But it will be, soon.

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Birmingham's blitzed Cathedral offers little



inspiration today. Its beautiful Burne Jones windows have been removed to a safer place, and their warm colourings no longer throw harmonious patterns over its old stones. It is bleak and cheerless. But on March 12, 1943, the people gathered there felt the glow of new beginnings, fresh hopes, the "kindred of the nations mingling again in the alchemy of love." Indian and British together, Hindus, Christians, Sikhs and Moslems, stirred by one deep desire—to find through all the difficulties and perplexities a new way of life for two nations who have been joined for so long in such strange partnership.

We need to replace enmity by friendliness, unhappy memories by the spirit of co-operation, suspicion and jealousy by confidence and trust on both sides.

The voice of the Bishop was clear and challenging.

The time seems to me to be ripe for a new attempt at mutual understanding. The whole world situation has changed since the black days of the Mutiny or of Amritsar. India now takes its place among the countries of the world as a group of peoples with a distinctive civilization spreading through a vast popu-

lation. By sheer weight of numbers combined with the intellectual ability of her leaders, India must inevitably in the future play an important part in shaping the destiny of the world.

What many of us in England desire is to see India freely choosing to be a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, forgetting in the exultation of freedom the present emotional antagonism.

I personally am convinced that, as regards India, such a slogan as "what we have we hold" is out of date. The mental attitude which it suggests is that of our early nineteenth century nabobs. TO REGARD INDIANS AS SUBJECT RACES HELD DOWN BY FORCE OF ARMS IS WHOLLY INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE OUTLOOK OF A MODERN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY. WHEN INDIA AND ENGLAND MEET ON EQUAL TERMS, WITH FRIENDLY RESPECT ON BOTH SIDES, A NEW ERA CAN BEGIN. Let us pray that God will hasten the time of its beginning. Let us also remember that our Christian missionaries have during the last two generations steadily worked for the new understanding, many of them showing a strong sympathy with Indian nationalism. In this movement

an outstanding figure was Charles Andrews, a leader of men born in our City. Towards the end of his life he was spiritually as much an Indian as an Englishman ; in him the profound gulf between the two peoples was bridged.....

We pray, then, today for an enlarged sympathy, a new unity, a turning back from repeated mistakes to a true fellowship in the future. We must link India to our Empire, not by might, nor by power, but by the spirit of Christ.

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Outside the Cathedral a group gathered and an Indian voice broke the silence,

This is the real Britain and this is real Christianity. In such an atmosphere the Indian problem can be solved.

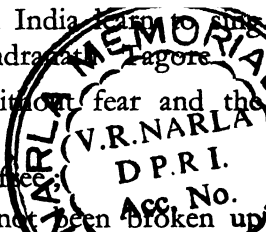
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So may both Britain and India join together the song of Rabindranath Tagore

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high ;

Where knowledge is free ;

Where the world has not been broken up



into fragments by narrow domestic walls ;

Where words come out from the depth of truth ;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection ;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert land of dead habit ;

Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

*Gitanjali*, 36.

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